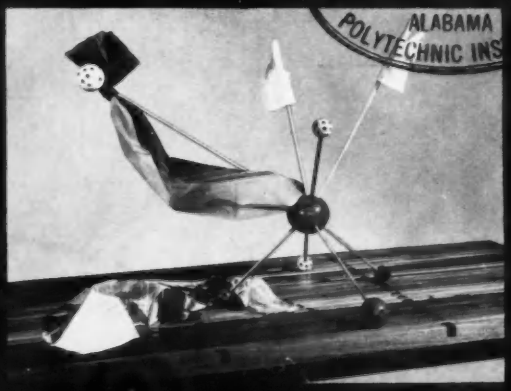
Design

THE MAGAZINE FOR MANUFACTURERS, DESIGNERS AND RETAILERS



MARCH 1952 NUMBER 39

The Council of Industrial Design

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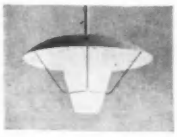


Penguin books (page 15)

Simpson's display unit (page 26)

GEC table lamp (page 6)

The Three S's

A RECENT ARTICLE in *The Economist* on "The Cost of Variety" defined three S's as follows:

> To avoid confusion about terms it is necessary to define briefly the exact sense in which simplification, specialisation and standardisation are used [in this article]. Simplification is the deliberate reduction of variety of manufacture, whether of component or end-product. Specialisation denotes the concentration of a factory or production unit on a very narrow range of products – the consequence of simplification pressed to the limit. Standardisation, a term often used as an alternative to simplification, is here taken to mean organised agreement upon and definition of performance, quality, composition, dimensions, method of manufacture or testing of a product. For example if a motor-car manufacturer were to decide to reduce his range of models from, say, ten to three, that would be simplification. The decision to make certain parts of the cars common and interchangeable would be standardisation. The supplier of sparking plugs would probably be making only that one product and that would be specialisation.

As these terms are used very loosely by the public and even by manufacturers we make no apology for repeating this clear statement. In considering the cost of variety it is reasonable at this harsh period in our national affairs to weigh it in terms of productivity. But unless we are pessimistic enough to believe that a state of "near war" will be regarded as normal in future, we must ponder carefully other aspects of the problem, such as social responsibility to the consumer and the worker, including the effect on design. Many people have written of the effect of mass production on the worker: clearly, it has raised material standards, but the educational importance of apprenticeship under good conditions is only beginning to be fully recognised now that it has all but gone.

So far as design is concerned, we must not forget that the making of an immense range of goods in comparatively small runs by machine over the last hundred years has meant that their design has not been taken seriously. Larger runs of a smaller number of patterns make it possible to employ skilled designers, to allow them to spend more time on each model and to reduce the designing cost per unit produced. The impact of the three S's has been considerable on the group of trades producing such goods as motor-cars, pumps and typewriters, for which replacement components are needed from time to time. No doubt it will go much further. It will be somewhat less, but still very important, on goods for which matching replacements

will be called for, such as pottery and some textiles. It will perhaps be least on goods whose basic structure remains pretty constant, where variation is achieved by alterations in surface pattern, such as carpets and printing.

There is no doubt at all that the public should benefit considerably by a wise application of the three S's. It is certain that in many trades the standard of design has been so low in the past that excessive variety was resorted to in order to stimulate sales. In durable goods it can be demonstrated that those of good quality, including design, naturally maintain themselves on the market for longer than those whose appeal is purely that of novelty. Moreover, novelty alone is hard to live with, once its first stunning effect has worn off.

Care must be taken that the three S's are not carried to a point where ease of manufacture completely overrides public convenience. A man with small feet finds it difficult to get shoes now – it might become impossible; and intense concentration on the largest possible runs might mean that admirable new designs were impossible to launch, and only slight variants of proved best-sellers were acceptable.

It is likely that a considerable demand for handwork would spring up to deal with "specials." This would be welcomed by those people whose imagination and manual skill find all too little scope in mass production. It would be a price worth paying for reasonable variety. G.R.

Notebook

EMPHASIS ON EXPORT: We make no apology for re-quoting two comments on this subject which were recently quoted in the *FBI Review*: both refer to British design for the United States market. Two spokesmen of the footwear industry said that "the importance of styling, price and quick delivery has become greater than ever," and noted approvingly "the very considerable initiative taken by a number of English manufacturers in their styling." More cryptically, the President of the National Council of American Importers declared: "The American woman customer has been taught to believe that good products come in smart packages. She has her own ideas about style and eye-appeal, and clever manufacturers see to it that she is pleased." He was referring specifically to the cosmetics industry, but his remarks could have a wider application.

CAN AMERICA LEARN FROM US? The American Institute of Graphic Arts asked ten American authors for their views "on the subject of book-making and design," and in their replies Britain got two unsolicited testimonials. Van Wyck Brooks referred to "the superior book designing of English publishing," and Lionel Trilling wrote: "I generally prefer the appearance of English books to American . . . I find that even a Penguin is a pleasure to hold and own, as its opposite American number can never be (leaving out of account, too, the presumed necessity of putting a garish cover on the American quarter book)."

CAN WE LEARN FROM AMERICA? A British Productivity Team is now visiting the States to see how, in the engineering and allied industries, design can best be integrated with production "to ensure the best utilisation of available materials" – or, more briefly, to study design in relation to productivity. Mark Hartland Thomas, the CoID's Chief Industrial Officer, and R. S. Medlock, Research and Development Engineer of George Kent Ltd, are joint leaders of the team, while its joint secretaries are J. Holland, of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, and R. R. Ponton, Standards Engineer attached to the design office of Rolls-Royce Ltd. Most of the eleven members have a technical background in engineering, and it will be interesting to see how far industrial design is important in this aspect of productivity.

TWO TAILPIECES: the first from an advertisement in the *Irish Jewellery and Fancy Goods Journal*, Dublin:

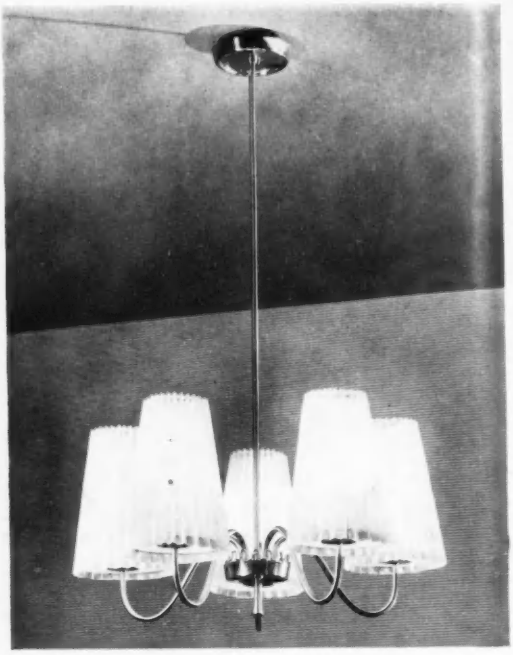
IRISH
Souvenir Jewellery

——— *Brothers (Birmingham) Ltd*
—— *Branston Street, Birmingham,* 18

The second, from a manufacturer's press handout on the occasion of the British Furniture Exhibition. This referred to "a novel SIDEBOARD, the front of which has the streamlined appearance of a radio cabinet, [with] cupboards opened by a cluster of knobs." A.D.

At the GEC's London headquarters in Kingsway, this new showroom has been designed as an appropriate setting for contemporary lighting fittings. Examples from the latest GEC range are illustrated, and the policy behind them is described, on pages 4 to 7.

WHITE GLASS DIFFUSER, *with snowflake motif, and pleated buckram shade, in a pendant fitting which allows for height adjustment – one of the new GEC range described opposite.*



PLEATED SHADES *(see page 7) contrast with bright lacquered brass in this five-light pendant. There is also a three-light version using the same components.*

CLEAR GLASS *with an engraved line pattern is used above the pleated shade in this single-lamp* (100 *watt*) *fitting.*

WALL FITTING *which can be adjusted laterally or vertically on a turn of the knob.*

NEW LIGHTING FITTINGS

designed for the contemporary home

A policy for design

by F. Winstanley
Director, The General Electric Co Ltd

DESIGN POLICY IN INDUSTRY is today a subject for serious study by British manufacturers. Much, but not all, of the credit for this renewed interest in design should go to the Council of Industrial Design for its patient, sometimes even impatient, propaganda. The idea, however, was in the air long before the Council was thought of; the voluntary Design and Industries Association has been campaigning for better standards since 1915 and the Federation of British Industries gave a strong lead in 1920 by founding its Industrial Art Committee. In my own view it is essential that there should be much closer collaboration between the Council of Industrial Design and the manufacturers, particularly in the field of fittings for electric lighting.

Large companies, like the GEC, have for long maintained design departments and have always produced new fittings as well as the traditional lines for which there will always be a demand. But what makes the situation different and definitely more interesting today is the emergence of a contemporary idiom as opposed to the pre-war haphazard essays in modernism. This contemporary idiom is better seen than explained; it is in a sense international, though each country will produce its own national interpretation; it is, of course, functional in the sense that it employs new techniques and new materials to meet new requirements (in the lighting industry we must take advantage of every modern development); but it is also comely, as opposed to the clinical austerity or jazz modernism of the inter-war years.

It may often be easier for small companies to take immediate advantage of new trends than it is for large, complex organisations, but that does not mean that the large undertakings turn blind eyes on the future. The GEC is fully aware of the importance of producing a proportion – an increasing proportion – of light fittings suited to the growing market for contemporary furniture, and acceptable, we hope, to the vigorous band of young architects who will be leading the tastes of the new generation. That in short is what we understand by "design policy" and that is why we have encouraged our Chief Designer, L. E. A. Phillips, MSIA, to give a free hand to his younger staff designers, like R. J. Reynolds and R. Simmonds, who have been largely responsible for most of the new designs illustrated here.

The policy in practice

by Robert J. Reynolds and Richard Simmonds
of the GEC Fittings Design Office

MANY PEOPLE interested in good design have felt in recent years that the designers of lighting fittings went to one or other of two extremes, with no middle course. As Paul Reilly wrote in an article in DESIGN in March 1950: "Of all the equipment of the home, the electric lighting has been most in need of design therapy. There has seemed, in this industry, to be no half-way house between the functional or clinical and the lush suburban . . . between the bathroom wall strip and the parchment-shaded electric candle, or between the office desk light and the over-hatted vase."

The latest range of lighting fittings to emanate from the GEC Fittings Design Office represents an attempt to bridge this gulf between popular taste and the demands of the modern architect and interior designer.

It was felt that many contemporary lighting fittings had tended to display an austerity of line lacking the

warmth and human appeal which the pipe-and-slippered English paterfamilias looks for in his home. The decision to steer between such austerity and over-ornamentation was prompted by economic arguments, for the GEC, which is the largest electrical manufacturing organisation in the British Commonwealth, necessarily depends on the creation of a wide market for its products. Its products have to please a large number of consumers while avoiding any tendency to what Mr Reilly stigmatised as "the lush suburban."

Since the purpose of domestic fittings is partly decorative, variety within the range of designs offered is an important consideration. To obtain this variety, a well-known method has been adopted: the manufacture of standardised components in different finishes will provide a number of interchangeable parts, which can be assembled in several combinations to form a wide range of fittings. Many materials lend themselves to such treatment; for instance, the shade of a fitting may be glass, pleated buckram, or a metal spinning, while the diffuser enclosing the lamp may be buckram, paper, plastics or glass. The flexibility that this system allows is, moreover, helpful to the manufacturer at a time when the material position is erratic and unpredictable.

The use of spinnings made from perforated metal, as reflectors, is thought to be an innovation in this country. Besides their decorative value, enhancing the appearance of the fitting, the perforations serve a useful purpose in lessening ceiling shadows. A variation on this theme, now being developed, is to spray the surface of an inverted perforated metal spinning with Chrysaline translucent plastic and use it as an indirect reflector.

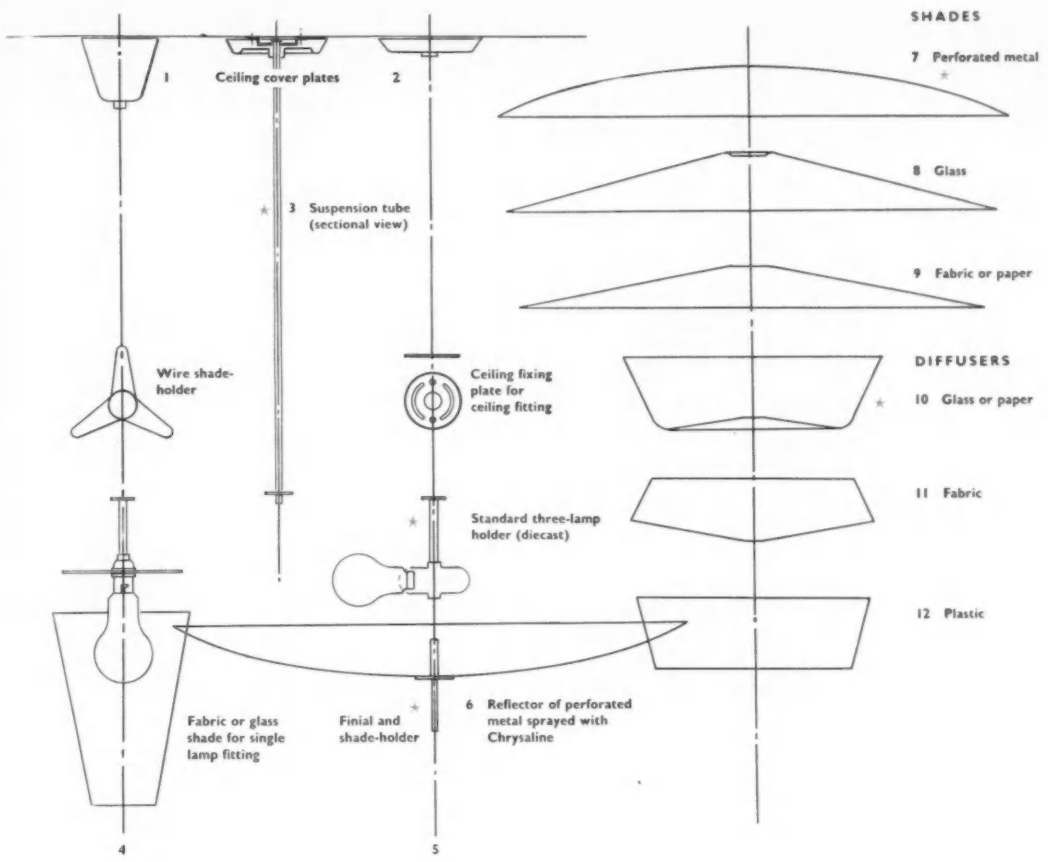
In the design of the new range, the main considerations were appearance, function and good lighting efficiency, all combined with sound electrical engineering. Several new fittings have been developed which allow adjustment of both the direction and the amount of light, but in general, the designers felt that there had been a tendency to over-emphasise this aspect of home lighting and to make a fetish of the mechanical action.

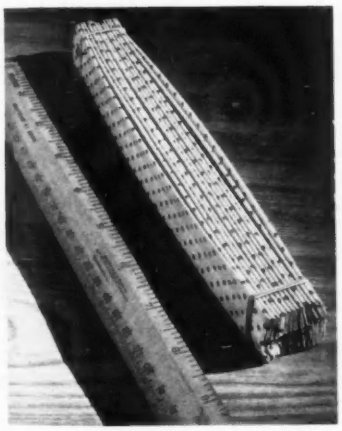
We have not been afraid to accept traditional designs as the basis of inspiration in some instances. There are several fittings which, while in the contemporary style, adhere to the conventional arrangement of several lamps placed at the end of bent tubular arms radiating from a central body. Again, it was felt that the traditional pale brass finish possessed a lasting attractiveness, and it has been retained for this reason.

*The components marked * on the drawing opposite are used together in the fitting illustrated above. It is intended to use some of these components, in other combinations, in further fittings which are now under development.*

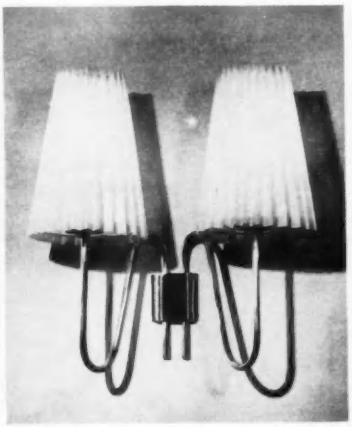
Either of two ceiling cover-plates **1**, **2** *can be used with the suspension tube* **3** *as the basis of a single-lamp fitting* **4** *or a three-lamp fitting* **5**. *In the latter form, it is possible to use any of the three shades,* **7**, **8**, **9** *and the three diffusers* **10**, **11**, **12**. *Alternatively, the reflector* **6** *can be used where indirect lighting is required.*

GEC's latest table lamp, to sell at £6, has lacquered brass finish on the base, Burma teak for the shaft, and pleated paper for the shade.





Requirements of export packaging were borne in mind in designing the new fittings. This shade folds compactly, as the foot-rule shows, and fits into a Cellophane wrapper.



At a retail price of £5 6s 3d including purchase tax, this is the least expensive item in the range. Pleated shades, as on left, are used in several of the new fittings.

An opal glass bowl is used in this fitting. Pleated fabric, perforated metal (see cover, and top of facing page) and Chrysaline are other materials used in the GEC range.

THE PROBLEM OF HANDLES

by C. G. Tomrley *

HANDLES AND GRIPS are still too often designed nineteenth-century-wise, as things that stand alone – self-sufficient, unresponsive shapes and excrescences, no more suggesting the grip of the hand than finials on a church spire.

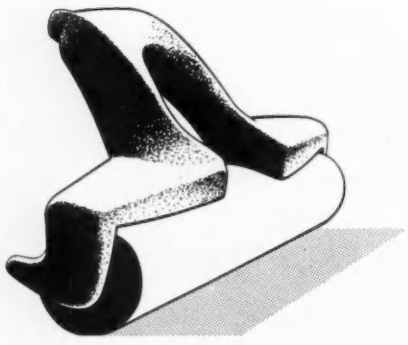
No handle is truly a handle unless part of the human hand, or the whole hand, applies pressure to it. The kinds of pressure are numerous, depending upon the direction in which the handle is to move and the inertia to be overcome. All handles move, either on their own axis (like a door-handle) or with something attached (the lid of a kettle, a suitcase, a jug or a lavatory chain).

Shapes designed to meet a particular pressure often have a special beauty; the prow and keel of a boat, an aeroplane propeller, a child's toy celluloid windmill, are examples. Even the buffers of a railway engine are satisfactory to look at because they accurately describe to the eye what they are for: many of the illustrations to this article show the same quality.

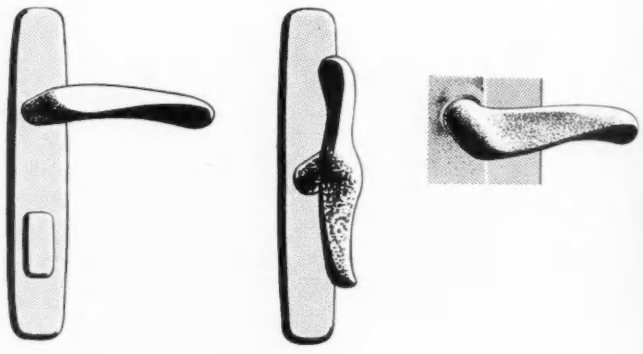
Handles not designed in this logical, straightforward way have something lacking. In the past, the limitations of manufacturing processes and of cost had much to do with their design; the knob has evolved through the turning process, the bar handle from the existence of continuous-strip materials such as wood mouldings and metal rods and tubes – all economical to manufacture. But nowadays malleable materials and casting and moulding processes have so greatly developed that there are opportunities for entirely fresh thought in the handle-producing trades.

In Czechoslovakia some interesting experiments are being made by Professor Zdeněk Kovář at the School of Arts and Crafts at Gottwaldorf. In the course of product-designing, he and his students have treated as design problems in their own right the handle of a blockmaker's inking roller (Figure 1), door handles (2), the handles of cutting-out scissors (3), and a saw handle (DESIGN, September 1949, page 15). Two things characterise this team's designs; all their

* *Mrs Tomrley is in charge of the Council of Industrial Design's Record of Designers*



1: *The handle of an inking roller taken as a design problem by Professor Kovář. An earlier type of handle caused sores and callosities on the rim of the operator's hand.*



2: *Door handles designed by Professor Kovář of the School of Arts and Crafts at Gottwaldorf, Czechoslovakia, and his students. Besides being sculpturally pleasing, these handles describe their movement by their form. They have been treated as design problems in their own right.*

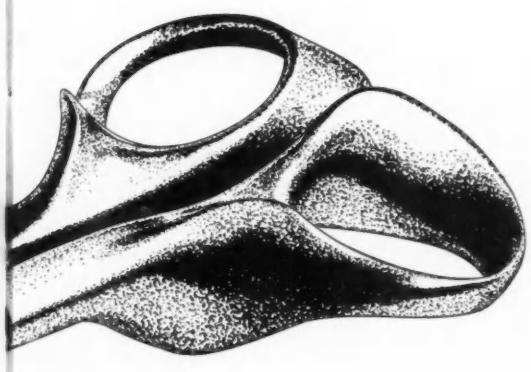
shapes are beautiful in a sculptural, flowing way; all convey to the eye what sort of movement is expected from them and how the hand should go about the job.

In Britain one finds similar examples in unexpected places. On the sliding doors of LMS railway compartments there are twin handles or levers which, if turned about the pivot which is at the bottom of the vertical shape, release the catch and at the same time provide the hold by which the doors are pulled apart or closed (4). Each handle embodies a splayed, curved form at the top which indicates clearly the movement to be expected, as clearly as Professor Kovář's door-handle suggests twist. The LMS handles provide curved channels for the serried finger-tips against both sides of a central rib; the fingers, excluding the thumb, hook tightly against the rib with the weight and strength of the arm and shoulder behind them. Owing to the ball-bearing runners of the doors, the pressure required is not great: if it were, then this handle would be quite wrongly designed.

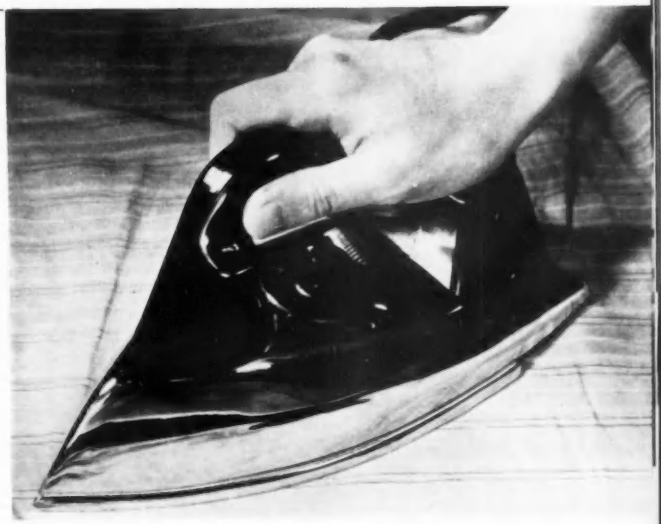
Here is the kernel of the whole matter, and it demands close attention. Principles of stress well known to architects and engineers come into play in handle design. First of all, strong pressure requires distribution over a wide surface (as in 1 and 5) if it is not to cause damage through undue strain or friction. The reform of handles should begin in industry, where a particular grip becomes part of an operative's life. A hand performing a movement repetitively can suffer every degree of mischief from slight occasional discomfort to open sores, callosities and permanent deformity. Undistributed strain may also result in breakage of the handle; if it does not, then some part

4: *Finger-tip pull-grips on railway compartment doors, carefully designed to describe their purpose and fulfil it, in conjunction with the ball-race which carries the weight of the doors.*

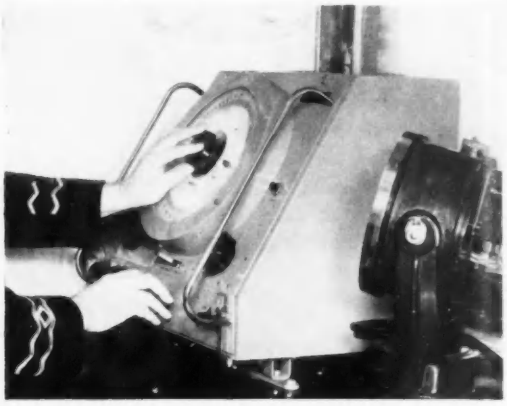
5: *A whole-hand grip. An iron presents a particularly exacting problem as it is heavy, and must be both pressed upon and lifted by the same handle; only a grip distributing pressure evenly over the whole hand suffices.*



3: *The same Czechoslovakian team designed scissors to which the hand could cling, thus distributing the stresses over a wide area of skin instead of allowing them to concentrate on a few small points of contact.*



6: *The two finger-tip controls on this automatic dialling machine show that they are for different purposes – one for light squeeze, and one for light pressure.*



7: *Finger-tip controls. The knobs are large enough to accommodate the tips of several fingers, and the hand is thus used in an easy open position.*

or other is heavier or stronger than it would need to be if the strain were properly distributed.

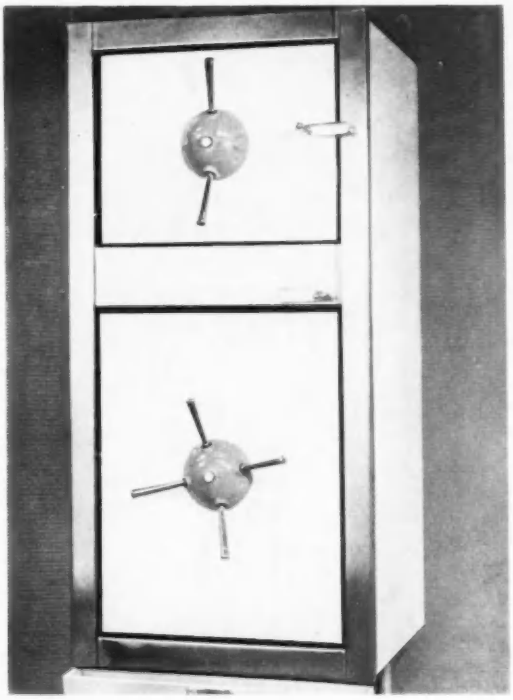
Consider what that marvellous tool, the hand, can do. Beginning with the finger tips, it can grip lightly (kettle lid), twist (handbag snap), wind (gas tap, clock key), press (Button A). If a handle demands no more than finger-tip pressure (6, 7) its problem is not great. Turned knobs and little fancy finials are legitimate in their place; much satisfaction can be derived from the right form even for finger-tips (clarinet keys, and fiddle pegs, 8).

Then there are handles which require the pressure of all the fingers (for example, bathroom taps). There must be room for the entire bunch; pressure is precarious as the hands may be wet. A most irritating range of grips in this group are those often fixed to small sink geysers. The cock must revolve through more than a whole circle; only the *wrist* can do this, not the fingers, which are hinge-jointed and not universal-jointed. Thus the user wants to use the whole hand and the thing he holds should be on a stalk like a bath tap, not stubby and close to the machine. The fingers lend themselves to being used as a hook (10): the man who designed the stirrup straphanging device on the London Underground trains years ago knew the effortlessness of this grip, whereas the present ball fitting demands squeeze and tires the hand, especially if tightly gloved. It offers no alternative position; the stirrup allowed many.

8: *Finger-tip twist. Correct, simple and pleasing to the eye.*

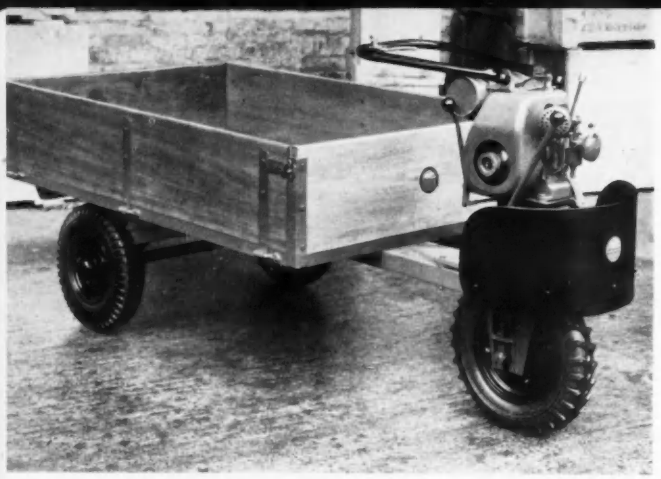
9: *Relaxed-hand grip. The fingers, heel or palm of the hand can all be used. The paw of an intelligent dog could operate a handle of this shape.*

The palm grip (9, 11) is normally an instinctive one for pushing actions (big swing doors). The old type of gate-change car gear lever had a mushroom top, a most intelligent shape for the actions required, often performed in stiff gloves. Many machine operations are performed with the palm or the heel of the relaxed hand although the handle is designed for quite another grip, in practice more tiring. More attention might well be given to opportunities for



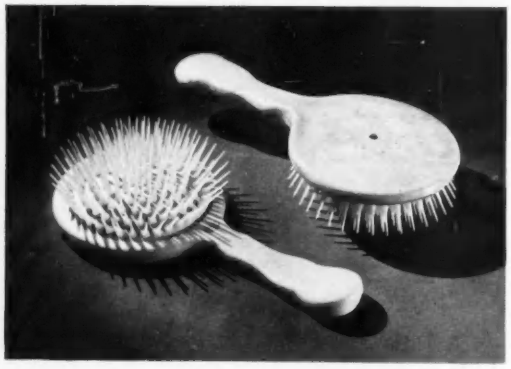
10: *Grip for pulling lever-wise with a circular motion – the heavy-duty equivalent of the domestic oven-door handle; the door must fit more tightly as the handle comes round. For extra strength the operator's hand is used hook-wise, the pull coming from the arm; hence the suitability of a long slender shape. (Compare a hand-mortiser lever, or a railway signal-cabin lever.)*

11: *Cupped-hand hook-grip suitable for short-throw levers. (The use of this shape for the handles of, for example, trowels or brushes is not correct.)*



12: *A handle-bar like this gives multiple positions from all of which, owing to its length, leverage can be exerted without effort. Note also the relaxed-hand control levers.*

13: *Small unpicking scissors by Kovář and his team. Their shape reduces strain and cramp by allowing the application of a light squeeze of the whole hand, where formerly two fingers did the work and the rest of the hand curled itself out of the way.*

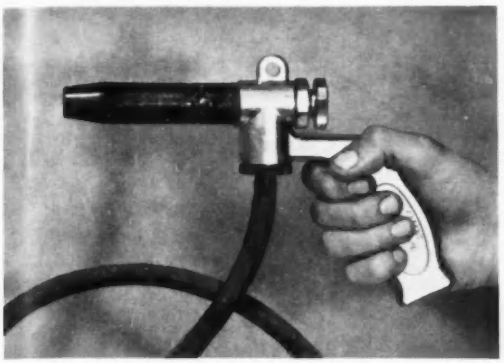


14 *and* **15:** *Hand-grips for firm control. Again arm-extension grips, but designed for crosswise motion instead of the out-from-shoulder motion of* 16. *The usual brush handles are incorrect and depend too greatly upon a muscular clutch to maintain the necessary arm-extension. (Many people grip ordinary brushes over the back to secure better control.)*

hand-relaxation; examples such as 12 and 13 are all too rare.

Finally, there is the fist grip, which when necessary provides the maximum strength of grip and mastery of the hand-piece. This should be so designed that the great pressure exerted is properly distributed (14, 15, 16). Here the opportunities for reform, especially in industry, must be numerous. Heavily-loaded commercial vehicles are often steered by the ordinary smooth circular steering wheel, whereas a wheel spoked like a ship's helm, giving leverage, would reduce the strain on the driver's hands, arms and shoulders. (Power-assisted steering is of course the best answer.) In the home, heavy windows are lifted by a hook accommodating only the first finger; powerful spring locks are operated by round handles necessitating squeeze where a loose grip would suffice if fins were provided; big screwdrivers are turned by a smooth cylindrical grip. Milling and ribbing is not the complete answer that it is sometimes held to be; it provides a non-slip surface for light pressures, but for heavy pressure its effect is unpleasant and it is no substitute for true shaping.

Of all the handles that need attention, the most widespread causes of annoyance are those tackled by strangers in public places – window and door catches, pulls, grips and gadgets in public vehicles, hotels, restaurants, lavatories, libraries and so forth. Designers should try to imagine them tackled by the unfamiliar eye and hand, and see that these handles describe by their form the motion they will perform (as Professor Kovář's do). Those who teach machine operators must often deplore the lack of logic which provides two identical handles that move in opposite directions, or the standardisation of the same grips for

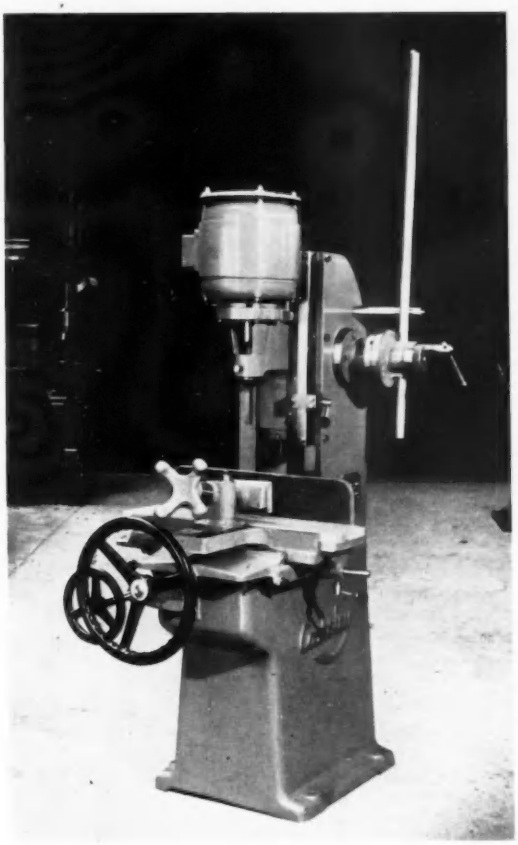


16: *Whole-hand extension-of-arm grip. This is essentially a grip for a driving action; steadiness of hold is required, so the bones of the arm are maintained in their parallel position.*

different types of movement, to say nothing of handles placed high, low or to one side of the operator, yet designed as if they were in a hand-shaking position; 17 is a rare example of what can be achieved by thoughtful design.

The exercise of logical thought, universally applied to the actions of the hand, would reduce the cumulative fury of the housewife, or other operative, who binds handles with string, bandages her fingers, avoids the handle and uses her elbow, or is driven to some other shift for want of better design.

The frequency and precision of use and the degree of pressure required are the governing factors. By all means let us make our furniture so well and so smoothly that the knobs and handles can afford to be decorative, as they were in earlier days; and let our pottery and glass be enriched by the graceful lines of sweeping, ample handles, following aesthetic as well as functional laws. There is an art of appropriateness, and it is best served in the solution of exacting problems of use and abuse.



17: *On this mortiser, a machine with a complex range of different actions, the handles are thoughtfully designed and indicate the type of movement and purpose to be expected of each. The steering-wheel types serve low-geared smooth adjustments; the four-lever screw-wind above is for a vigorous, possibly two-handed, tightening action; the small vice-type lever out to the right above is also for tightening, and use has been made of a tap-like knob and shank which indicate a swing of limited scope. The long lever bar enables a weight-lifting action to be performed.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1, 2 & 3: Drawings by A. R. Hundleby, MSIA, from photographs in *Tvar*.

4: LMS railway compartment door handles, illustrated by courtesy of British Railways.

5: Electric iron by J. K. Macleod Co Ltd, Canada, designed by Frank Sugden. Photograph from Canadian Design Index.

6: *Autodial* machine for automatic dialling of pre-selected telephone numbers, by Hall Telephone Accessories Ltd, Willesden. (Designed 1930.)

7: *Lodestone* long-range direction finder by Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Co Ltd, Chelmsford, designed by The Marconi International Marine Communication Co Ltd.

8: Violoncello designed and made by Leslie J. Heward, Otterbourne, Hants.

9: Door handle in the Royal Festival Hall designed by the London County Council Architects' Department.

10: Pressure steaming oven by Radiation (Large Cooking Equipment) Ltd, Warrington.

11: Nineteenth-century beer pump handles, recently exhibited from the collection of Thomas Fairley.

12: Motor truck designed by Arthur Wrigley, Wessex Industries (Poole) Ltd; with Villiers engine.

13: Scissors designed by Professor Zdeněk Kovář. Illustrations from *Tvar*.

14: Men's pneumatic cushion hairbrush by Halex Ltd, London E4, designed by E. J. Doudney.

15: *Firmgrip* carpet brush by John Palmer Ltd, Portsmouth.

16: Blow-lamp by Dex Industries Ltd, Twickenham, designed by E. M. Thomas.

17: Mortising and boring machine by A. Cooksley and Co Ltd, London EC2, photographed for DESIGN by Dennis Hooker, AIBP, ARPS.

PATRONS OF DESIGN : 6

SIR ALLEN LANE

SIR ALLEN LANE, founder and head of Penguin Books Ltd, refers to his business as a "factory." No other serious publisher does that. Few would, and even fewer could. But in Sir Allen's case it is not only true – 160,000,000 Penguin volumes have now been produced – but a matter for pride. For his idea of mass-producing good books gives him a claim to be considered one of the most imaginative younger business men in the country and, at the same time, an important contributor to public education in the last two decades.

Aldus Manutius may be said to have established a tradition of good books at low prices in the fifteenth century, when he printed and published the first pocket editions – serious books, attaining a high standard in their typography. But it would be hard to argue that there has been continuity of tradition ever since: the spread of literacy (especially after schooling became compulsory) caused a demand for reading matter in quantity, with a lessened regard for quality.

In 1906, Everyman's Library appeared. It was a landmark in British book production, well printed, cloth-cased, and reasonably priced: it marked "the first grafting of the 'Aldine' tradition upon the vigorous briar stalk of the cheap pocket edition"* in this country. On the Continent, the Albatross books, in the 'thirties, maintained very high standards of literature and of typography throughout an extensive series of paper-backs which, unlike Everyman's Library, included many contemporary authors.

Here were the foundations on which Allen Lane was to build: the starting-point for a notable endeavour.

In 1919, when he was sixteen, Lane had been apprenticed to his uncle, John Lane, at the Bodley Head – a publishing house which had maintained a reputation for book production since the days when it employed Aubrey Beardsley as an illustrator. Bodley Head books were not all *editions de luxe*, but they were no less expensive than other well-produced books from other publishers. After sixteen years in the family firm – by which time he had become managing director – Allen Lane felt that there was little scope for new developments in this field. More and more people, he thought, would buy good literature if it could be bought for the price of ten cigarettes (sixpence in those days). There was no shortage of sixpenny books as such, but many of them were novelettes or thrillers, and most were shockingly produced. Badly printed on bad paper, they were either frankly shoddy, or pretentious imitations of more expensive books with mock cloth bindings and flashy three-colour wrappers. "The paper-backed book . . . continued to betray in its typography the conviction of the publishers that the market for which it was intended had no appreciation of typographic dignity and charm."

Allen Lane's plan – shared with his brothers John and Richard – was to produce good reading matter in paper covers, with paper, printing and design worthy of the contents. No publisher, not even the Bodley Head, would have anything to do with the scheme, because it was then considered as unassailable fact that (*a*) there was no mass market for good books, and

* The quoted phrases on pages 14–15 are from the *Guide to an Exhibition of the Typography and Production of Penguin Books* arranged by the Monotype Corporation Ltd, July 1951.

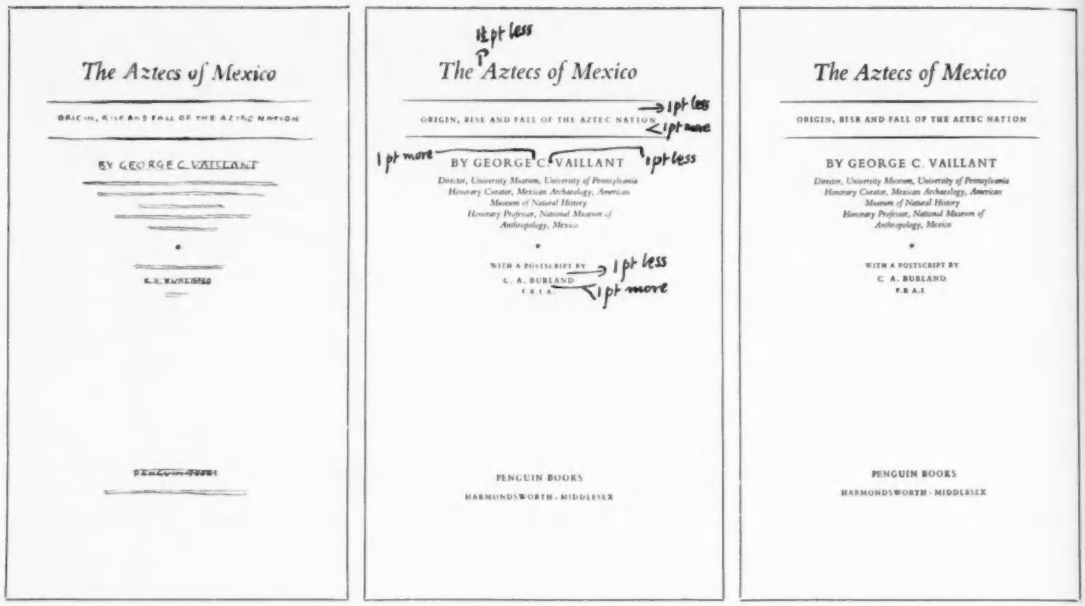
(*b*) the British reading public did not buy paperbacks. Amid prophecies of disaster from the trade, the Lane brothers brought out their first ten titles in July 1935. All of them were reprints of novels and biographies, the range being middle-middle to lower-highbrow. Twenty thousand copies were printed of each title, *i.e.*, about four times as many as a normal edition. A typographer-production-manager was employed from the start: Edward Young's formula for the Penguin cover, good in 1935, is still good today. And Allen Lane has continued to recognise the importance of the designer in a book publishing house. After the war, Jan Tschichold was brought over from Switzerland to develop this side of the Penguin tradition, and since then H. P. Schmoller, who came to Harmondsworth by way of South Africa and the Curwen Press, has maintained – some will say improved upon – the high standards set by his predecessors. John Overton is the firm's production manager.

To look back from these days of 10,000,000 Penguins a year to the first 20,000 in 1935, "when the whole venture could hang in the balance upon one tentative order from Woolworth's." . . . It was, in fact, an immediate success, and by the end of the year the brothers felt justified in forming a limited company with a capital of £100. They set up office in a couple of rooms over a motor showroom in Great Portland Street, and as a warehouse they rented, for £200 a year, the crypt of Holy Trinity Church, Euston Road. Two empty tombs were equipped with metal doors to hold the invoice books and petty cash.

By the end of the following year (1937) there were well over a hundred titles on the Penguin list, and the firm had outgrown its first slightly macabre premises. The Lanes then made another break with publishing conventions, which decree either a grandiose pile in WC2 or a rambling old house in WC1. For £2,300 they bought a three-acre factory site beside the Bath Road at Harmondsworth, and on it they erected a single-storey glass-fronted brick building, pleasant but distinctly factory-like in appearance.

The second Lane bird to hatch was the Pelican, almost identical in appearance with the Penguin, but devoted to serious non-fiction subjects. Since then, there has been a sizeable clutch: Penguin Specials (dealing with topical questions), King Penguins, Penguin Classics, Penguin Guides, Penguin Scores, Penguin Modern Painters, three types of Puffin Books for children, The Buildings of England, and several individual publications and smaller series (including The Things We See, published in collaboration with the Council of Industrial Design). From the first, the Pelican idea was taken seriously by scholars and

Cover designs by successive Penguin staff typographers, starting with the current version of Edward Young's original design. Jan Tschichold designed the Shakespeare *cover (with wood-engraved portrait by Reynolds Stone) and the* Pelican *(bottom left). The patterned paper for the* Mozart *music score and the cover for the new* Buildings of England *series are by H. P. Schmoller. Many printers have worked with Penguins.*


The Aztecs of Mexico
BY GEORGE C. VAILLANT
The Aztecs of Mexico
ORIGIN, RISE AND FALL OF THE AZTEC NATION
BY GEORGE C. VAILLANT
Director, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania
Honorary Curator, Mexican Archaeology, American Museum of Natural History
Honorary Professor, National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico
WITH A POSTSCRIPT BY
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Attention to small details is an essential part of good book-design. Above, a title page by H. P. Schmoller, Penguin staff typographer, is shown in the form of layout (left), final proof (centre), and the printed page incorporating the corrections marked on the proof.

scientists, and once the "reprints only" policy was dropped, there was no lack of eminent contributors as well as eminent editors for specialised series. The latter include Dr E. V. Rieu, Sir Kenneth Clark, Noel Carrington, W. E. Williams, G. B. Harrison, Eleanor Graham and Professor Nikolaus Pevsner (who, jointly with R. B. Fishenden, is responsible for the King Penguins).

Sir Allen enjoys working with his distinguished collaborators. He enjoys entertaining them at his late-Georgian house, with its lawns running down to the River Colne; but he is no celebrity-hunter. He likes learned men because he is interested in learning, ideas and education. A close acquaintance speaks of his "bubbling enthusiasm, love of travel and interest in new experiences – in farming, food and wine, as well as printing, typography and distribution. For all his love of books and education he strikes one as a man of action rather than contemplation."

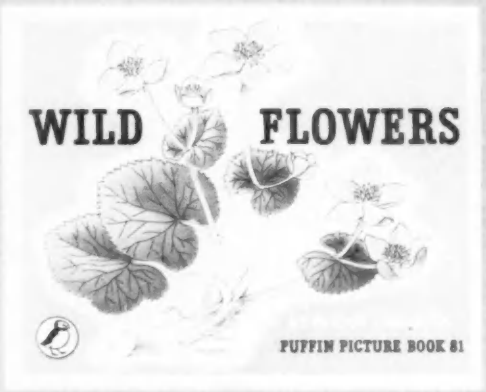
Lane likes youth as well as eminence, and is prepared to gamble on it. No one on the staff at Harmondsworth looks a day over 35. Especially in book design and illustration, the policy is to encourage young unknown artists, although there is also an impressive list of known names: John Piper, Enid Marx, Kenneth Rowntree, Marian Mahler, Clifford and Rosemary Ellis.

The original Penguin idea was to publish a book impeccably produced within the limits set by its very low price. But in its illustrated series – the Puffin Picture Books, the Modern Painters, and especially the exquisite and scholarly King Penguins – the firm has achieved books which demand to be judged by the highest typographical and production standards. This has repeatedly been recognised by the National Book League; and in last year's Exhibition of British Book Design, Penguin tied with one other publisher for the largest number of exhibits selected. Still more recently, the Monotype Corporation has paid Penguins the unusual compliment of devoting a whole exhibition to them: as at least 95 per cent of the 1,800 titles published by the firm have been set in Monotype faces, the Corporation may justifiably feel some pride in the success which has attended intelligent use of its products. Allen Lane has more than fulfilled his purpose of "producing a cheap book one wouldn't be ashamed to own." The knighthood conferred upon him in the New Year's honours list has been earned by devotion to good book-design as well as good books. G. U.

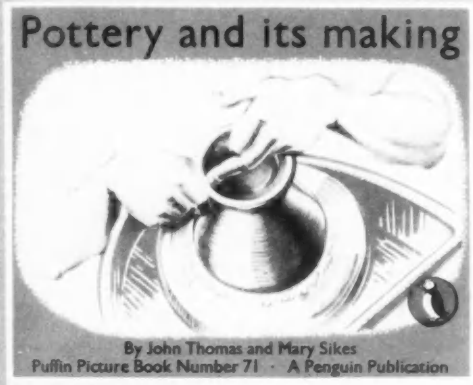
Some Puffin cover-designs, and illustrations from Puffin and King Penguin Books, are reproduced in colour on the next four pages.

SOME PUFFIN COVERS

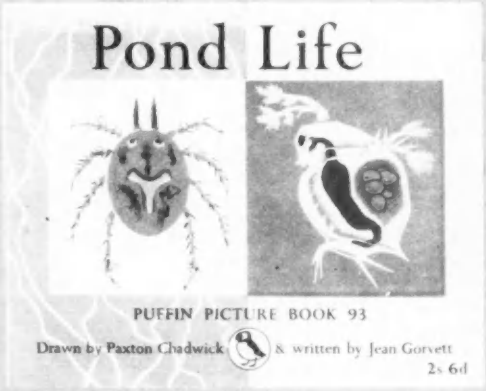
Fish and Fishing
by Bernard Venables



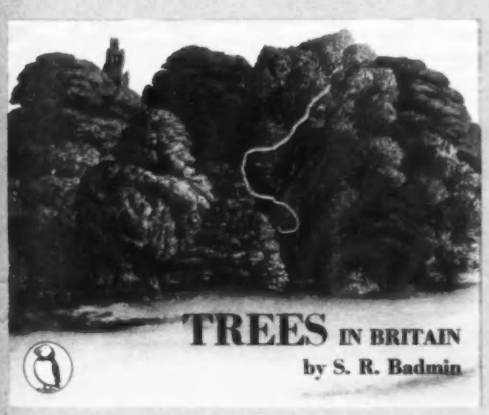
Wild Flowers
by Paxton Chadwick



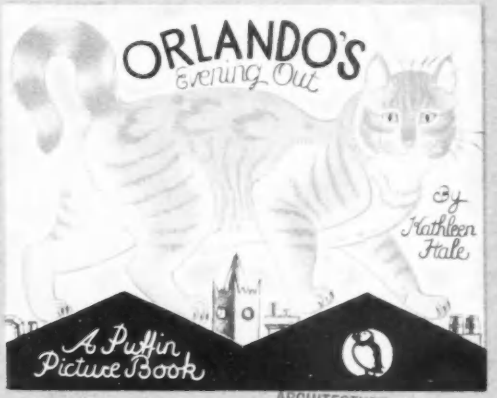
Pottery and its Making
by John Thomas and Mary Sikes



Pond Life
by Paxton Chadwick and Jean Gorvett

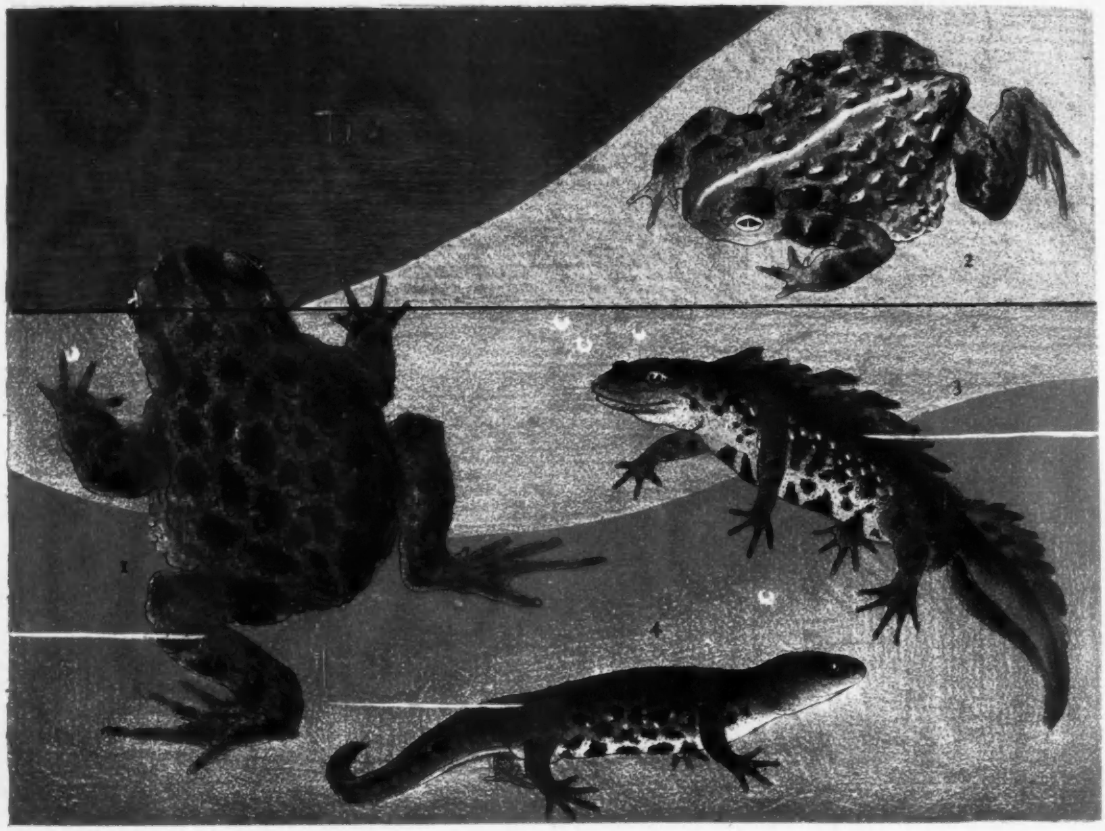


Trees in Britain
by S. R. Badmin



Orlando's Evening Out
by Kathleen Hale

ARCHITECTURE LIBRARY
MAR 2 6 1952



PUFFIN PICTURE BOOKS AND KING PENGUINS

The Puffin Picture Books for children were launched in 1940. The picture above is from a forthcoming addition to the series, *Pond Life*—drawn on Plastocowell by Paxton Chadwick.

Below: from one of the early King Penguin volumes—*Popular Art in Britain*, by Noel Carrington; drawn on the plate by Clarke Hutton.

Beech leaves, drawn on the plate by S. R. Badmin, from his book *Trees in Britain.*

Below: a page from *Animals on the Farm* by Eileen Mayo, a 1951 Puffin Picture Book. Actual size. Photo-lithographed in four colours.

There are now over sixty books in the King Penguin series, started in 1938. Inspired at first by the Insel-Bücherei of Leipzig, the series has developed a character of its own—most notably, in the wide range of subjects covered.

TRINITY COLLEGE KITCHEN

One of the twenty drawings in colour reproduced in the King Penguin production of *Ackermann's Cambridge;* printed by offset lithography in six colours.

This four-page inset was printed by offset lithography by W. S. Cowell Ltd of Ipswich. Of the books represented in it, Cambridge (*above*) *was printed—like almost all the King Penguin series—by John Swain and Son Ltd of Barnet; all the other illustrations are from books printed by Cowells.*

Cabinets or camouflage?

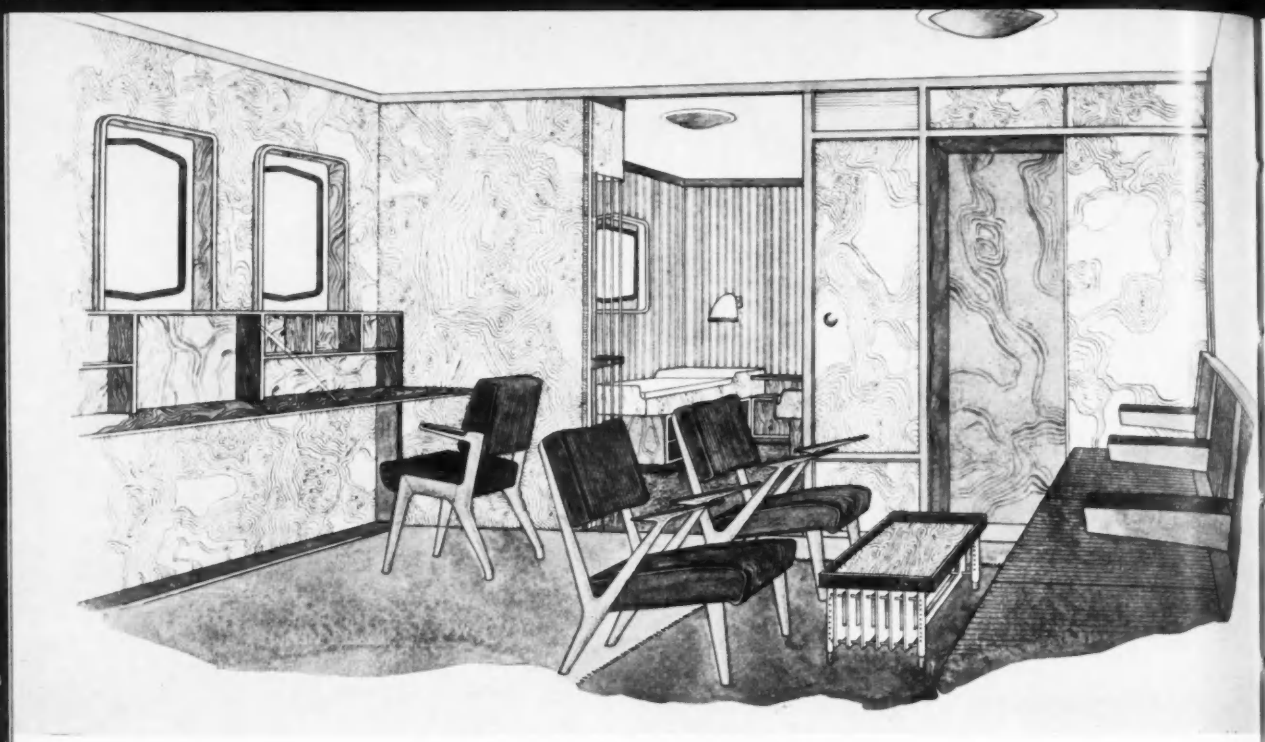
THERE ARE CERTAIN classic deceits that have become the stock-in-trade of the design reformer: electrified coal fires, incandescent candle wax, Queen Anne cigarette lighters, cottage teapots and Tudor tavern cars; these are all fair game and are more or less discredited. In a rather different category are the various forms of camouflage practised by certain sections of the radio industry – the false-fronted bookshelf concealing a loudspeaker or the "Chippendale" sideboard housing a radiogram; for at the back of such make-believe is the perfectly logical argument that an instrument for reproducing sound should be heard and not seen.

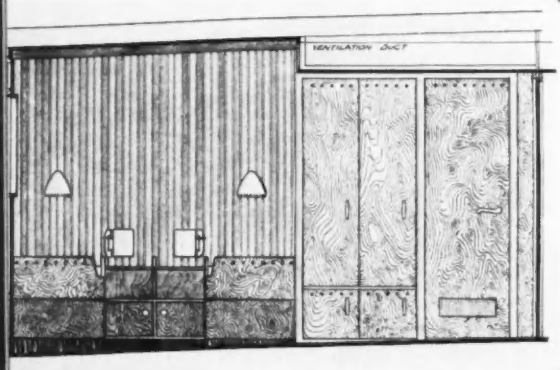
It seems from a report brought back from South Africa by R. N. Fitton, of R. N. Fitton Ltd, manufacturers of the Ambassador radio and television sets, that the South African market is more prone to these temptations than we are at home. Two examples of the way South Africans dress up British-made Ambassador "works" are here illustrated with Mr Fitton's comments as published in his firm's house organ, the *Ambassador News*. The third illustration shows Mr Fitton's own idea of cabinet design – the latest Ambassador radiogram as made for the home market.

"THE TOP DISPLAY. *This is a style with popular appeal in the Union. We doubt if anyone would buy it in England. It would certainly have a very limited market. There is a lot of hand carving. It is produced entirely from solid wood.*"

"THE DISPLAYGRAM. *Rather antique looking don't you think? The receiver is behind the two doors at the top. The record changer is behind the lower panel carrying the loudspeaker.... We doubt if the British housewife would look forward to dusting all those ledges.*"

The latest Ambassador radiogram for the home market.

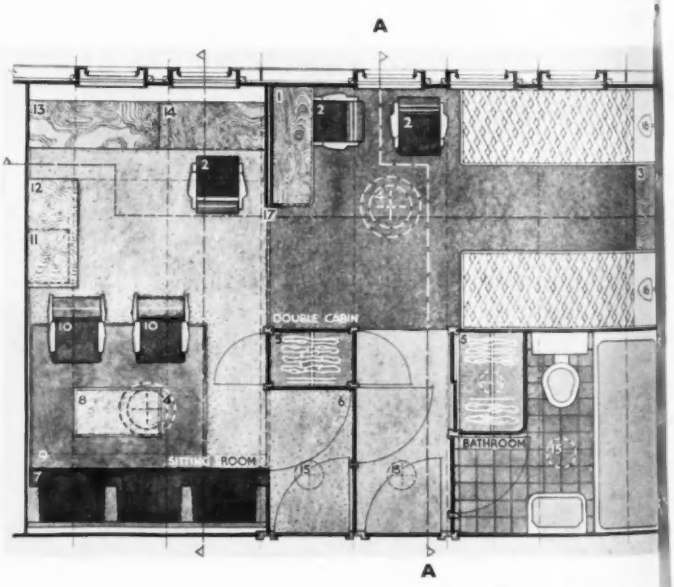




THE WINNING DESIGN *by I. M. T. Samuel. Above: Perspective view of the sitting room, with part of the principal cabin visible through the sliding doorway. A folding bed (not shown) is housed under the desk on left; the bed-settee on right has folding arms and a pull-out seat. Bulkheads are of seven-ply wood faced with hardwood veneers. Left: This section through A A on the plan is a reminder of the presence of ducts and the absence of parallel flat surfaces which present special problems in the interior design of ships.*

KEY TO PLAN

1 *Dressing-table finished in polished bubinga*
2 *Occasional chairs (Australian pearwood)*
3 *Bedside cabinet (bubinga)*
4 *Concealed ceiling light (spun brass)*
5 *Fitted wardrobes with automatic lighting*
6 *Convertible porch/wardrobe*
7 *Bed-settee*
8 *Occasional table (grey sycamore)*
9 *Loose rug*
10 *Easy chairs (Australian pearwood)*
11 *Concealed wash-handbasin*
12 *Folding table (grey sycamore)/dressing table*
13 *Cocktail cabinet*
14 *Folding writing table*
15 *Flush ceiling lights (spun brass)*
16 *Bed lights (translucent glass with engraved pattern)*
17 *Sliding door*



Ships' cabins : a complex design problem

by **Alister Maynard** *Chief Officer, Scottish Committee, Council of Industrial Design*

THE PROBLEM OF designing ships' accommodation includes the elements both of architectural planning and of industrial design. The CoID's Scottish Committee, with its close proximity to the Clyde shipbuilding industry, therefore took advantage of the generous offer of an anonymous donor, who has on more than one occasion in the past supported the work of the Council, to sponsor a competition in this field. The competitors were required to provide, within given overall dimensions, accommodation which could be used either as two double cabins (one having a private bath) or a suite of a double cabin and bathroom with a sitting room.

In arriving at a solution to such a complex problem, the designer is called upon to put himself successively in the position of, first, the shipbuilder to consider, for instance, convenience of construction; second, ship-owner, to provide flexibility in the letting of accommodation and the most economical use of space; third, crew, to achieve ease of maintenance and service; and fourth, passenger, to provide comfort, convenience and an agreeable atmosphere.

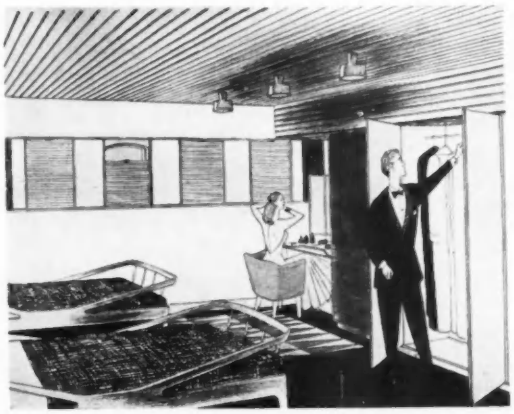
In addition to planning, therefore, the designer is confronted with such problems as wall construction, lighting and the design of lighting fittings, and furniture, including the design of dual-purpose fitments, as well as soft furnishings. The aesthetic quality of the whole grows naturally, as it should, out of the sensitive treatment and appropriate detailing of the parts.

It would be generally true to say, of the entrants in this competition, that those who produced the best plans seldom achieved high merit in aesthetic appeal; but Tudoresque and ornate or pompous luxuriousness were pleasingly absent, most competitors contenting themselves with achieving a clean, fresh, workmanlike approach. Signs of original constructive thought were more noticeable in practical details than in decorative finish, and the only really sensitive colour-scheme was ruled out on elementary mistakes in planning and the general unsuitability of fragile furniture and lighting fittings for ship work.

The winning design proved to be the work of a last-year architectural student at the Edinburgh College of Art – Ian M. T. Samuel. His work showed clever use of space and ingenious detail, with a good understanding of the use of materials, and a general feeling of restrained simplicity of line. In imaginative design, from the standpoint of appearance, it fell short of an entry from Wylie and Lochhead Ltd, of Glasgow, prepared by Professor R. D. Russell and Associates, of the Royal College of Art, which was awarded a special prize of £100; but this latter contained several points of planning which were not acceptable to the judges.

Four entries were highly commended and received special prizes of £25 each. These were from Leslie Eckersall of London, Andrew Jackson of East Kilbride, Thomas R. L. Robertson of Kirkcaldy, and a joint entry from Åke Leimalm and Claes V. Feder of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The competition produced a great many useful ideas worthy of study even by old hands in the shipbuilding world, and it underlined very forcibly the desirability of designers working as a team; with such a large number of trades and materials, no one person can be an expert in designing for all.



DOUBLE CABIN *by Professor Russell and Associates. Their design for Wylie and Lochhead was awarded a special prize by the judges – E. C. Leach,* FRIBA *(Cunard), J. R. M. Poole,* ARIBA, AMTPI *(Timber Development Association), John Robson,* MBE, B SC, MINA, MI MAR E *(Alexander Stephen and Sons Ltd, Linthouse).*

Case history

NEW CABINET FOR MARINE RADAR EQUIPMENT

In the latest Cossor model, improved performance is accompanied by a thorough "tidying up"

THE INTRODUCTION of a Mark II version of their marine radar equipment gave Cossor Radar Ltd an opportunity to introduce a housing of improved design, in keeping with the improved performance of the new model. They took the opportunity; an improved rack and a completely new display console (the cabinet for the indicator unit of the equipment) are the result. The illustrations on this page show the old model and the new, with a prototype of the new cabinet to illustrate a stage in the development of its design.

The cabinet is manufactured for Cossor by Imhof's (Alfred Imhof Ltd), by whom it was designed. Conditions affecting the designer's approach to the problem were that the chassis had to be resiliently mounted and the control panel had to be splash-proof – quite apart from Cossor's desire that the new cabinet should be modern in appearance.

In fact the chassis is sprung internally at top and bottom, allowing for movement in all directions, and the cabinet takes up no more space than the external framing which was used before. The lid, when shut, is rendered splash-proof by a rubber gasket. When opened, it slides down into the back of the cabinet (as can be seen in the photograph of the prototype). The front panel can be unlocked and immediately removed, and then, by undoing two captive screws, the whole of the electronic equipment within can be swung out and forward so that it becomes accessible to the service engineer.

The new cabinet differs from its prototype in a number of small, but not unimportant, details:

(*a*) The shape and the positions of handles have been changed.
(*b*) The lid and the front panel now lock separately.
(*c*) The corners of the base have been given a small radius.
(*d*) The gasket has been improved.

The material used is aluminium alloy; the finish, grey stove-enamel. Measurements are: height 3ft. 4¼in., depth at top 19in., at base 16¼in., overall width 2ft. 5¾in.

THREE STAGES IN DESIGN DEVELOPMENT
The indicator unit of the original Cossor marine radar equipment; a prototype of the new cabinet; production model – the cabinet, designed and made by Imhof's, for the Mark II equipment.

Design in American printing today

ONLY A FEW American printers, and those the large firms, have their own design staffs; most of them are content to buy artwork outside or to produce what other people have designed. Many firms do however pay great attention to copy preparation.

These were among the impressions gained by R. Geoffrey Smith, joint managing director of W. S. Cowell Ltd, during an extended business visit to the United States. Though Mr Smith would not claim to have seen more than anyone else might have seen in the same time, he saw with the eyes of a design-minded printer: and he found time to visit not only the great printing centres of New York and Chicago but Philadelphia, Washington and San Francisco as well, and to make an excursion across the Canadian border to Toronto.

It was in Toronto that he found one of the few printing firms which corresponded closely to the English idea of a printer with a design service. This firm had an art director, "whom they accepted as an art director in the fullest sense; he had designed their reception room and offices and the coach painting of their delivery vehicles as well as the jobs they printed (which were mostly in the package and label field) and the concomitant publicity material."

But a great deal of printing design, in Geoffrey Smith's experience, was the work of freelance designers. In Chicago, he met one such designer – not one of the "big names" in the field – who gave his annual net income over the last three years as between $24,000 and $27,000.

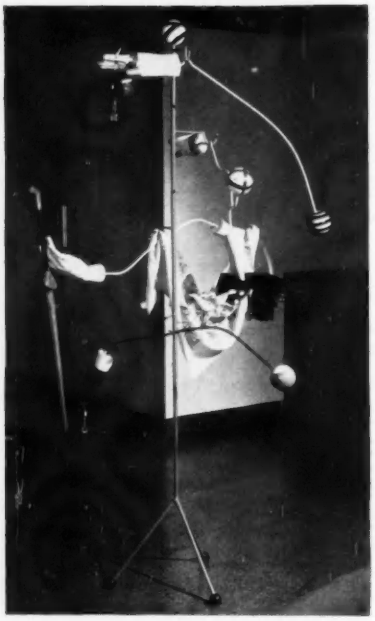
In American printing works, great attention is given to planning with the aim of utilising to best advantage the available resources in men, machines and type, but he found that the designer was not brought in at this stage as much as he should be; more often it was the concern of the works manager and his staff.

He noted the good work and growing influence of such bodies as the American Institute of Graphic Arts in New York and the Society of Typographic Arts in Chicago, both of which are intimately concerned with standards of design in printing – the former especially in book-printing and the latter in printing for commerce and industry. The STA has its own clubroom in which there is always a small exhibition of well-designed print (*cf* DESIGN, June 1950, pages 16-18).

More commercial printing is produced in Chicago than in any other city in the world; Chicago claims the world's largest art school – the Art Institute, with 7,000 students; and in Donnelley's, Chicago has also the largest single commercial-printing business. "But it was noticeable that in talking about Donnelley jobs, people would refer first to the quality of their design and production, and only after that to the vast size of the organisation." It may be significant that Donnelley's has its own highly qualified design staff.

It was an American speaker who, at a recent meeting of the Design and Industries Association in London, said that the products of any country are designed by that country's civilisation – the designer is only the middleman between product and society. The observation adds point to Geoffrey Smith's comment on American society today, that "keeping up with the Joneses" is as important as ever it was; that the dollar is still the one yardstick by which America judges success or failure. Economic considerations come unashamedly first in the design of most American printing: the average printer will look admiringly at a fine piece of English book-printing and admit that he could not produce work like it; but he will add that he is not interested in trying to do so – there would not be enough financial reward in it. This may explain why Mr Smith found many printers who reached a high standard of design in their work, but very few who reached the highest. At the same time, design is in the air and the number of American printers who are taking the subject seriously is larger than ever before, not for altruistic or idealistic reasons but because they realise increasingly that, in printing, good design *pays*.

"Americans are fond of reminding the visitor that theirs is a new country," Geoffrey Smith commented. "I would suggest that the United States stands now where England stood, culturally, in the mid-eighteenth century. The period from 1750 to 1820 was a golden age of English design in many fields, and it may well be that, if she can rid herself of the emotional tangles which complicate her national life today, America will emerge into a similar golden age of design – despite the present preoccupation with dollar values." A.D.



New shop fittings

THE ENLIGHTENED APPROACH to design which characterises Simpsons of Piccadilly is reflected in the display fittings within the store. The units illustrated (left and on our cover) are examples. The floor stand was designed by Terence Conran and makes unconventional use of glove display hands and rubber gloves filled with plaster. Gaily painted balls help to balance the bent metal rods which are mobile and suspended only by hooks.

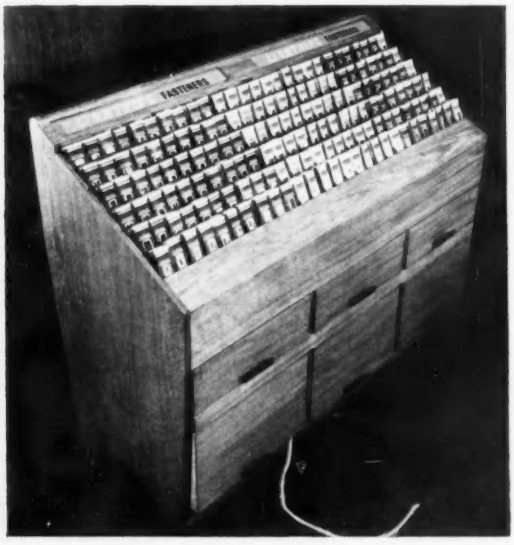
The unit shown on the cover consists of wooden dowels fitting into holes drilled radially in wooden balls, and it is firm enough for use on a counter. As the dowels can be fitted at many different angles, groupings to suit both the merchandise and the space available can be achieved. It was designed by Natasha Kroll, Simpson's manager of design and presentation.

THE IDEA of unit counters for haberdashery which originated with the Spool Cotton Co, New York, has been adopted by Central Agency Ltd, Glasgow.

The fittings of both display and stock sections vary according to the merchandise for which they are intended – *i.e.*, Coats' and Dewhursts' sewing cottons, Lightning zip fasteners (as illustrated below), or general sewing accessories. Units are manufactured for Central Agency by George Parnall and Co Ltd.

SPECIALLY BUILT for Liberty's Christmas trade, the display fitting below is one of a number designed by Hulme Chadwick, ARCA (assistant, Bernard McGeoghegan). It is collapsible, and can be stored away in a small space until required for later Christmases.

The unit has adjustable shelves; these are painted in various matt colours. The glossy white-painted metal framework contrasts with aluminium clips and turned wooden feet of unstained beech.

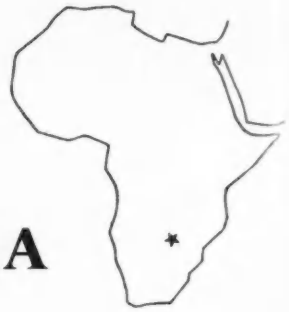


IN BERLIN, one of the oldest-established manufacturing perfumers, Max Schwarzlose, is putting into effect a redesign scheme intended to give unity to everything connected with the firm – not only its shops and showcases but its packs and price-lists as well. Professor Eduard Ludwig is the designer throughout. In the showroom above, he has deliberately chosen plain wall surfaces and counters to form a quiet background to the packages displayed, and throw them into greater prominence.

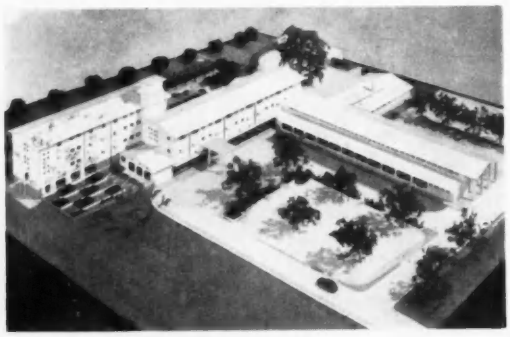
Close contact between management and designer has enabled Professor Ludwig to achieve a house style in which simplicity is the keynote. First results were so encouraging that the plans have been extended to include factory and office redesign; already, in the words of *Graphik*, "praise is due for the exemplary collaboration between employer and designer, and the courage which sets such a goal despite the difficulties which still beset industry in Berlin."

The illustration above is reproduced from *Graphik*, Stuttgart, No. 8 of 1951.

Furniture and fittings for Africa's newest hotel

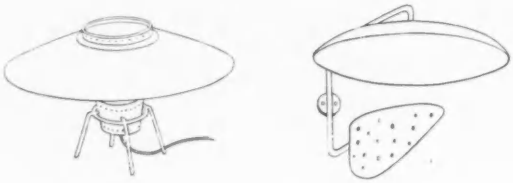


DESTINATION: LUSAKA



The opening of the Ridgeway Hotel, Lusaka, will be something of an event in the life of Northern Rhodesia. Architect for the building is G. A. Jellicoe, FRIBA. *It is being constructed by Costain's, and is illustrated here from a model made by John B. Thorp.*

Light fittings for the hotel were specially designed by Dennis Lennon and A. B. Read, RDI, FSIA, *and made by Troughton and Young Ltd. Above: two ceiling pendants with spun metal shades. Below: the table lamp which is also seen in the colour photograph opposite, and a wall-bracket fitting.*



A FIRST-CLASS HOTEL – the kind of hotel that would surely fascinate a contemporary Arnold Bennett – is being built at Lusaka, the capital of Northern Rhodesia, in time for opening next December. It has a twofold claim on DESIGN's readers' interest: first, because the interior decoration, furniture and furnishing were the responsibility of one designer (Dennis Lennon, MC, ARIBA) working in close consultation with the hotel management: second, because the management, looking for high standards of contemporary design in the smaller accessories, found it possible to select most of them from British manufacturers' standard ranges.

E. de S. Hall, manager-designate of the Ridgeway Hotel, looked at many South African products in the furniture and other industries before coming to England, where, at the South Bank Exhibition, he saw first-hand evidence of the quality and quantity of designers' achievements of the last few years. From this beginning all else followed – from the commissioning of Dennis Lennon to the selection of such small items of equipment as knives and forks.

The cutlery is, indeed, of special interest as it shows the influence of an enlightened patron on the standards of a trade. The design was commissioned in 1945–6 by BOAC from Kenneth Holmes and N. R. G. Poynton of the Leicester College of Art, and was originally made by Gladwins for the exclusive use of the air line; but it was so generally admired that BOAC agreed to make it available to other users, and the design is now in Gladwin's range as the *Grace* pattern. Besides being selected for the Ridgeway Hotel, it is in use in the Royal Festival Hall restaurant.

Credits: The furniture was designed by Dennis Lennon, with four assistants, and made by Scottish Furniture Manufacturers Ltd. (For details see *The Cabinet Maker*, 27 October 1951, etc.) Other major suppliers, besides those mentioned in captions on this page and opposite, include: CARPETS, James Templeton and Co Ltd; FABRICS, Tibor Ltd, Edinburgh Weavers, Donald Bros Ltd, Wilson and Glenny Ltd, Warner and Sons Ltd; WALLPAPER, Cole and Son Ltd, John Line and Sons Ltd; CHINA, Dunn Bennett and Co Ltd.

SOMETHING NEW INTO AFRICA: *prototype furniture for the Ridgeway Hotel, Lusaka, recently displayed at Murray House in London. Accessories seen in this group include a double wall-bracket light-fitting by Troughton and Young, with pleated crimson silk shades; print by Ganymed Press London Ltd; curtain material by David Whitehead Ltd – one of several patterns specially designed by Terence Conran, of Dennis Lennon's office.*

A condiment set and sugar sifter in Embassy *hotel plate, from the standard range of Gladwin Ltd.*

These water jugs are of Brierley crystal by Stevens and Williams Ltd, supplied through Johnson and Jorgensen Flint Glass Ltd.

GOOD DESIGN, GOOD BUSINESS

Eighteen years ago and today

For examples of good design which have proved commercially successful, we look back this month to furniture reviewed in Design for Today *eighteen years ago – and in* DESIGN *a year ago.*

Designed in 1933; still selling well

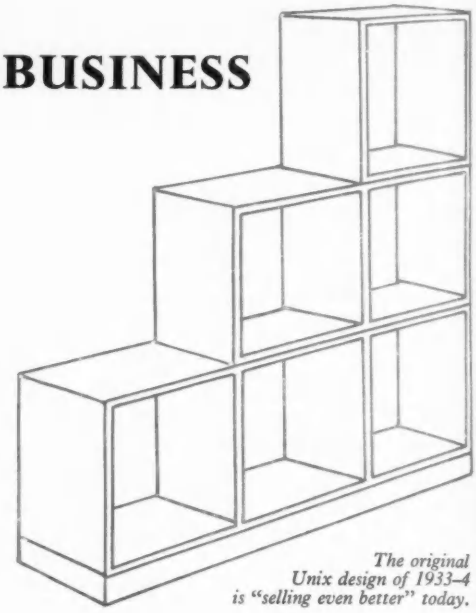
IT IS OFTEN argued that a really well-designed product will keep on selling longer than one that relies for its saleability on novelty. The argument has seldom been better exemplified than by the Unix range of bookcases, featured as a new product in *Design for Today* in March 1934, and still in profitable production today – selling even better than before the war, despite inevitable price increases and purchase tax, and nearly ten years' absence from the market when war conditions made production impossible.

"The Cinderella of the furniture trade" is how John Baker, managing director of Phoenix House Ltd, describes bookcases. They have too often been neglected by furniture manufacturers, and when they *have* been given attention, their function of housing books has often been regarded as secondary to their appearance.

Mr Baker believes this order should be reversed – books first, looks second; and it was for this reason that he decided that his publishing firm should market its own bookcases as well as books.

Credit for their design goes to Phoenix and to James Leonard, MSIA, of the Educational Supply Association Ltd, whose experimental designs for a sectional bookcase at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1933 first attracted the former's attention. Together, Mr Leonard and Phoenix worked out the average sizes of books and developed a case into which 95 per cent of them would fit. The basic unit is a square, and the cases are made in sections of up to five units each. They are available either open-fronted or with sliding glass doors (which can be removed for cleaning). Unlike other sectional bookcases at the time of their introduction, and many others today, they need no fixing devices but simply stack one on top of another, held together by their weight and by the well-seasoned wood which is used in their construction.

Larger book units and record units have been added to the range: these are of unit width, but their height and depth are greater.



The original Unix design of 1933–4 is "selling even better" today.

Unfortunately the Unix design cannot comply with Board of Trade conditions for tax-free furniture, and Phoenix therefore market four utility models, each with three shelves, of non-unit construction, to supplement the Unix range.

Phoenix bookcase in the tax-free range, made by Compactom Ltd.

Units an 'unqualified success'

TO REPORT THAT unit furniture which has been on the market for little over a year is "an unqualified success" is no ordinary event. I. N. Carvalho, chairman of Castle Brothers (Furniture) Ltd, was able to make this report to his company's shareholders at the recent annual general meeting – when, also, he reported that the year's sales had been the highest in the history of the company.

A table and chairs from the new unit range, designed by John Mole, were illustrated in DESIGN last March; other items include bookcases, bureaux and chests. Castle Brothers were hesitant to embark on large-scale production at first, and gave only 10 per cent of their productive capacity to this range; but orders quickly mounted until they were twenty weeks in arrears with delivery. Despite ever-increasing production, this leeway could not be made up until last December. Now, in 17 months, total sales of the pieces (excluding chairs) have exceeded 11,000.

Many retailers in districts which have until now seen little contemporary furniture are planning to include Castle's units in local exhibitions in the early spring.

Chairs and extending dining table from the Castle range of unit furniture, which also includes a number of storage units.

First examples of the range in oak (an alternative to the original pencil-stripe walnut) were shown at the British Furniture Manufacturers' exhibition in London during February.

School furniture 'aroused interest'

E. ATKINS LTD, manufacturers of the stacking nursery chair (above, right), report that though the quantity sold so far is not large, the chair "has attracted a lot of attention . . . and aroused considerable interest."

Since it was illustrated in DESIGN a year ago, the design has been modified to enable the chair to be made largely of beech, as the quality of the plywood available was not high enough. Only the arms are now of plywood. The matching table has a plywood top, but again the frame is of beech.

Atkins intend to continue the development of the chair and produce it in a size suitable for ordinary schools as well as nursery schools.

Beech frames give added strength to this stacking nursery-school chair and table (Atkins).

Hand-made table: 'gratifying' sales

FINALLY, WE ILLUSTRATE a craftsman's product – the glass-topped occasional table by Herbert Berry, with its sculptural wooden legs, illustrated on DESIGN's front cover last March. It is not the purpose of the craftsman to compete with the machine in quantity production, and sales figures are not the only measure of success; but it is noteworthy that Mr Berry has sold 150 tables of this very individual design – a figure which he regards as "very gratifying" and above his early expectations. The fact that the table knocks-down and can be packed in a flat box may have something to do with its popularity. Orders from the more progressive retailers have been consistently repeated, and, despite the general recession in the furniture trade and an inevitable five per cent increase in price, sales show no signs of falling off.

Glass top and wooden legs make a "knock-down" table of unusual design (Herbert Berry).

Design NEWS SECTION

METHODS & MATERIALS

A substitute for nickel-plating

Present restrictions on the use of nickel-plating have focused attention on ways of achieving similar effects by other methods. Among these, the *Niklit* process, developed by Metal Processes Ltd, Birmingham 24, gives an attractive, non-tarnishing and reasonably protective surface to copper, brass, or their alloys, not by deposition but by alteration of and penetration into the surface of the metal itself. The process can also be used with steel, zinc or aluminium if the metal is brassed or coppered first.

The Niklit method involves simple immersion in a warm chemical bath, without electrical equipment or current. It leaves the surface texture unchanged: where a polished finish is required, the metal should be polished before immersion.

Like nickel-plating, the Niklit process can usefully be employed as a basis for chromium-plating, as well as a finish in its own right.

PRODUCTS

Neon sign with movable letters

Ever since neon signs were invented, the lack of interchangeability in their characters has been recognised as a disadvantage. Normally, once a neon sign has been made, it must remain in its original form; the wording cannot be changed. This disadvantage has been overcome in the Neogram sign, which consists of a shallow display case whose back panel is a ferro-magnetic plate. The letters are made separately, and each one has a magnet in its base; they can be rearranged in any order, and they are held in place magnetically. The front of the case is a hinged glass frame which completes the circuit, causing the sign to light up; conversely, opening the frame immediately disconnects the current, and so renders the sign fool-proof.

The Neogram sign is no longer completely new – it has already been displayed at the BIF, where it aroused wide interest. But in design it has recently gone a stage further with the commissioning of special letter-forms for Neogram use, designed by David Kindersley, sculptor and lettering artist. There are two alphabets – one of normal width, one condensed, both in capitals only.

A Neogram sign, with the letters in their glass-fronted frame.

Both show variations from the traditional shapes of engraved or printed letters; these follow logically from the technique of glass-bending by which the Neogram letters are made. For the same reason, there are marked differences, in some letters – *e.g.*, the "N" – between the full-width and the condensed alphabets. Each alphabet is made in two sizes, with letters 2¾in. high and 1½in. high.

New furniture shown at Earl's Court

"The manufacturing side of the industry, through its annual trade exhibition at Earl's Court, has now taken action that will help to re-establish contact with the user by opening its doors to the public at certain times, so that they can see, at one time and under one roof, what is being done. The retailer should not be anxious if the manufacturer seeks to establish closer contact with the user. . . . The more the whole process from design to use becomes an intimate two-way process, the sooner will there be a critical buying public, a greater interest in the home scene, and a rebuilding of a native tradition."

These comments on the value of the British Furniture Manufacturers' exhibition were made by J. C. Pritchard, of the Furniture Development Council, in a

Printing in Colchester 1852–1952

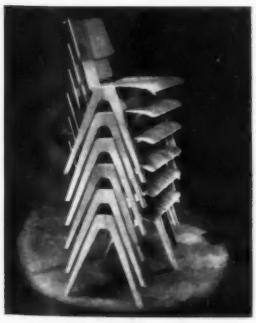
BENHAMS have been printers in Colchester for a hundred years. The Queen Anne house depicted in Broom Lynne's drawing is the home of a policy which we would commend to readers of DESIGN. Here, through the most direct contact with the consumer and the closest co-operation between designer and craftsman, we seek to apply the best contemporary typographical standards to a wide range of print problems. It might help you to address your enquiries to the Print Director at

BENHAM AND COMPANY LIMITED *Colchester*

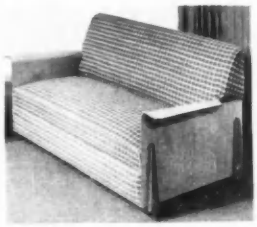
paper which he read at the Royal Society of Arts on 16 January. As DESIGN goes to press just as the exhibition opens, we cannot add any topical footnote at this time; but we hope to return to the subject next month, and meanwhile we illustrate below some new pieces of furniture which will, no doubt, have been spotted by observant exhibition-goers.

The occasional table above, designed by Ewart Myer, is made by Horatio Myer and Co Ltd, and sells at £3 19*s* 8*d*, tax-free. The materials used are bent plywood and solid timber, the plywood top being veneered in oak, mahogany or walnut. The same press and jigs are used in making the headboard of the 2ft. 6in. divan by the same manufacturer, illustrated below. This also is tax-free. The headboard can be veneered in oak or walnut, with legs to match. A natural waxed finish is used.

Below: Six *Hillestak* chairs can be easily carried by one man, according to the manufacturers, S. Hillé and Co Ltd. These versatile chairs (described in last month's DESIGN, page 31) can also be joined together in rows of six by a locking device.



This *Snipe* chair, designed by A. J. Milne, MSIA, is from a new range of tax-free furniture by Holmoak (E. Horace Holme Ltd), shown for the first time. It is of beech with sprung seat and back, and arms and loose cushion of Dunlopillo. Like most of the Holmoak range, including a settee to match the chair, it is covered with fabric from Tibor Ltd. Retail price, £17 6*s* 9*d*.



This new utility *Put-u-up* settee from Greaves and Thomas Ltd has moulded wooden ends which curve over and form arms. A similar style but with upholstered arms is available. The folk-weave upholstery is available in shades of red, green, grey and brown. The model illustrated sells at £21 19*s* 6*d*. There are armchairs to match.

Wall-birds

W. J. Saville and Co Ltd, who say, "we notice that from time to time DESIGN shows colour reproductions of wallpapers," draw our attention to their new range of hand-made cut-out paper birds, which were "produced primarily for the display trade, but . . . many wallpaper shops are interested [in them] for home decoration." An illustrated leaflet is available from the firm (Savko House, Eagle Wharf Road, London N1).

Scented to Hong Kong

Perfumed stationery is not everybody's choice, but it is apparently a successful line for overseas selling: the range introduced by Castell Bros Ltd, London EC1, "is having a very successful reception in home and export markets." This stationery is impregnated with Picot perfumes; there are six shades of paper, six scents, and six pictures of the flowers they come from. The better-than-average drawings are by D. W. Burley, of Castell's design department. The firm reports with pride that letters "sent as far as Hong Kong . . . are received still strongly scented."

PUBLICATIONS

CATALOGUES RECEIVED: Alfred Imhof Ltd (cases, racks, panels, etc); Dawe Instruments Ltd (electronic measuring equipment); Furniture Industries Ltd (Ercol furniture).

Reflector leaflet *R* 8 and sign leaflet *S* 9, issued by Linolite Ltd, light fitting manufacturers, 118 Baker Street, London W1.

Illustrated catalogue from Rollalong Caravans Ltd, Southampton Road, Ringwood, Hants.

An attractive catalogue of *Cumbrae* furniture – the first in the history of the company – has been produced by H. Morris and Co Ltd, Glasgow. It has spiral wire binding and is sectionalised for easy reference. Dimensioned sketches supplement the photographs.

Another notable furniture catalogue is that of Ernest Race Ltd. It gives even fuller details, and is in loose-leaf form so that full-page photographs, plans, elevations and notes can all be included. The catalogue is on sale at 2*s* 6*d* per copy.

About Aluminium is a reprint of a series of ten articles published by the Northern Aluminium Co in advertisements in the technical press, forming a brief introductory review of the qualities of aluminium.

Business Methods for the Country Craftsman is a new booklet published by the Rural Industries Bureau (price 1*s*). It deals practically with aspects of business ranging from stationery to insurances.

EXHIBITIONS

An exhibition of packaging for gold, silver and jewellery is to be held by the Design and Research Centre for these industries at the time of the British Industries Fair in May. Results of investigations into protective materials and display presentation will be shown.

New wallpapers and decorative schemes were shown in "Decor 1952," an exhibition held by Arthur Sanderson and Sons Ltd. Their London showrooms were redesigned for the exhibition and the use of model rooms enabled related wallpapers, furnishing fabrics, furniture and paintwork to be brought together in individual settings.

From Sanderson's exhibition: a wallpaper in terracotta and white, based on a nineteenth-century design by William Morris, and a woven furnishing fabric in terracotta and lime green.

CoID NEWS

Design Review, the Council of Industrial Design's photographic index of good current British design, will be reopened at the Council's headquarters in the summer. In its new form it will be more limited in the range of industries covered and more selective in design and quality. As a start it is likely to comprise some 5,000 items, mainly from industries manufacturing durable consumer goods. The selection procedure will follow the lines successfully established for the Festival of Britain, and close consultation will be maintained with those industries still to be represented in Design Review.

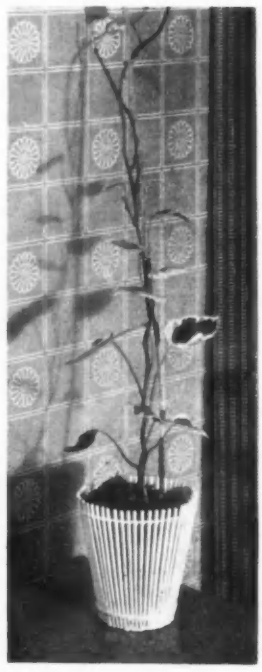
Manufacturers whose products have been included have already been notified. Others can obtain further details (including a 3-page duplicated circular, *Notes on Design Review*) from the Industrial Division, CoID, Tilbury House, Petty France, London SW1.

LETTERS

Those Swedish windows

SIR: The swinging frame window shown in your article on page 29, January 1952, is not quite as new as the article would imply. They are, for ease of cleaning only, to be found in the wards of the London Hospital, built 1876. I do not know if they are coeval with the building or a later installation.

continued overleaf



But the adjustment is the next and obvious step. In the Hospital the swinging frames are inset into ordinary sliding sashes. This offers, potentially, the best of both worlds.

E. M. NOYES, MA, ASSOC I MECH E, M INST F,
Epsom, Surrey.

Progress in fireplace design

SIR: Twenty-five years ago we built our own house, and one fireplace I had built to my own ideas almost resembles the 1952 design (the Hadley; DESIGN, January 1952, page 20). I then endured much criticism – "it doesn't look quite finished"; "it's all right for *you*, but I prefer the multicolour blocks that give one a good mantelpiece."

From experience I know that Pamela Mara did not sketch the worst atrocities of the period to 1939, when building ceased. I have a relative whose fireplace resembles a couple of striped tigers and a spotted leopard, crouched ready to spring.... The house was built in 1930.

War conditions forced us to move into London in 1941. We looked at many houses: and oh, the horrible fireplaces! One monstrosity was in raspberry red. . . . In the end we chose a house where the dining-room had a fireplace in pearly pale-grey tiles. This design was one of half-a-dozen which the builder had put up for his customers' choice; and on that estate of more than 500 houses only about half-a-dozen people had chosen that neat pastel design. Most customers wanted hefty slabs, faced with tiles in yellow-cum-brown.

I write this letter out of sheer relief because your article was the first criticism of fireplace design I had ever seen – in the past, it has always been *me* to blame.

CLARA L. SMITH
London SE11

CREDITS

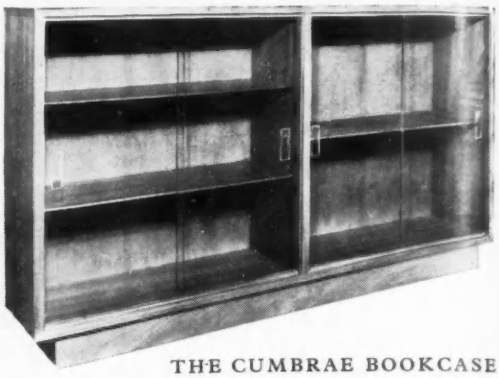
The articles in *The Economist*, referred to in our leading article this month, were "The Cost of Variety" (29 December 1951) and "Industry and the Three S's" (5 January).

The line blocks on page 16 are reproduced by courtesy of *Printing Review*.

The colour inset (pages 17–20) has been printed for DESIGN by W. S. Cowell Ltd.

The drawings on page 31 are by Pamela Mara.

Harry L. Ranson, now an independent marketing consultant with offices in New York and London, designed the Wind-a-Pak (DESIGN, February, p. 31) for Arvin Electric Ltd, of which company he was formerly general sales manager.



THE CUMBRAE BOOKCASE

has over ten and a half feet of shelf space behind easy running glass sliding doors: each shelf will hold about twenty normal size books or fifty pocket editions. It is of sturdy construction to last more than a lifetime, adaptable in use – a number of them can be stacked and ranged in countless arrangements – and they are tax free. Made in walnut, the price either horizontal or vertical is £16 13s. 6d.

MORRIS OF GLASGOW

Further information from
H. MORRIS & CO. LTD. MILTON ST. GLASGOW C.4.

The "Arclight" Sectional Plan Chest with Extension Top and Bookcase End, is widely used and recognised for its efficiency in the modern drawing office. The Extension Top forms an excellent drafting bench and the Plan Chest Top an ideal reference table. The Bookcase End, with adjustable shelves, provides accommodation for reference books and data with the advantage of accessibility close to hand. The Plan Chest section consists of two 3-drawer units with a separate Top and Plinth. Equipment, as illustrated, is available in three sizes. Reference numbers and overall lengths are as follows:—

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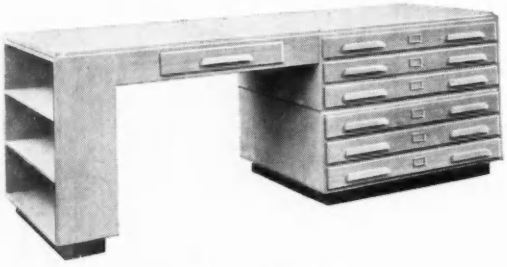

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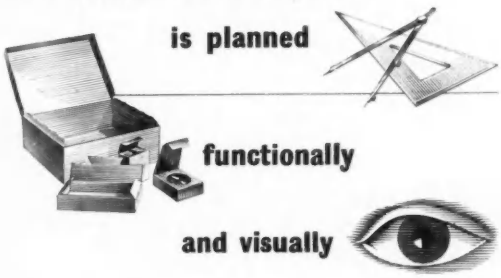

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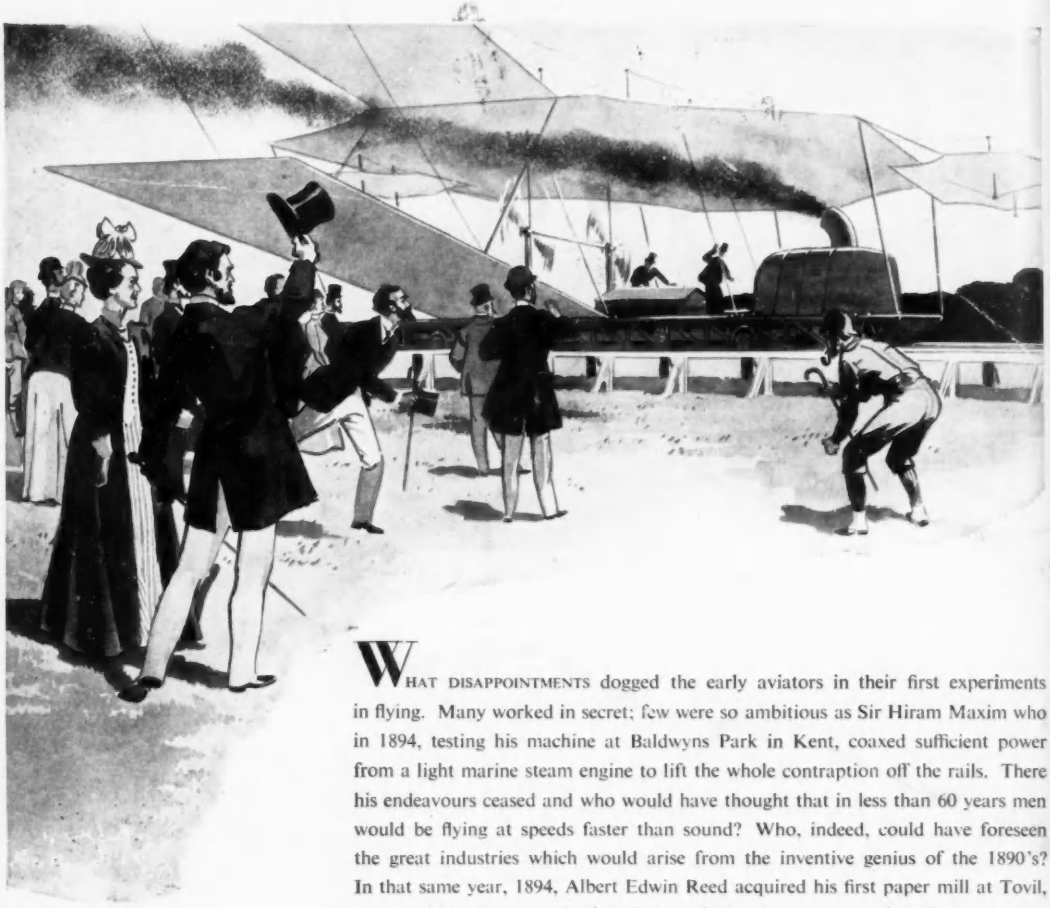

Scene reconstructed by Roy Carnon.

WHAT DISAPPOINTMENTS dogged the early aviators in their first experiments in flying. Many worked in secret; few were so ambitious as Sir Hiram Maxim who in 1894, testing his machine at Baldwyns Park in Kent, coaxed sufficient power from a light marine steam engine to lift the whole contraption off the rails. There his endeavours ceased and who would have thought that in less than 60 years men would be flying at speeds faster than sound? Who, indeed, could have foreseen the great industries which would arise from the inventive genius of the 1890's? In that same year, 1894, Albert Edwin Reed acquired his first paper mill at Tovil, near Maidstone, to lay the foundation of what is today one of the largest organisations of its kind in the world. He was outstanding among the pioneers of modern paper-making methods and from his vision and enterprise have grown the great Aylesford mills of the Reed Paper Group, where giant high-speed machines turn out mile after mile of newsprint and the tough Kraft paper which has entirely revolutionised this country's packaging methods.

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Design

APR 30 1952

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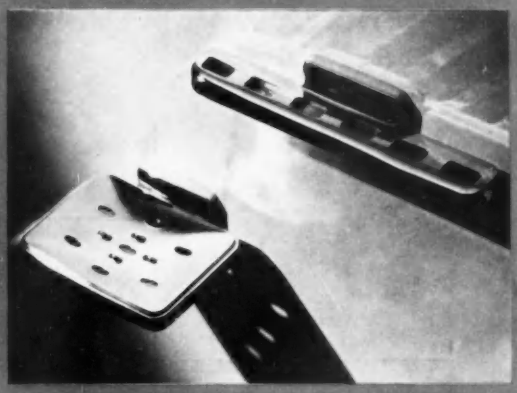

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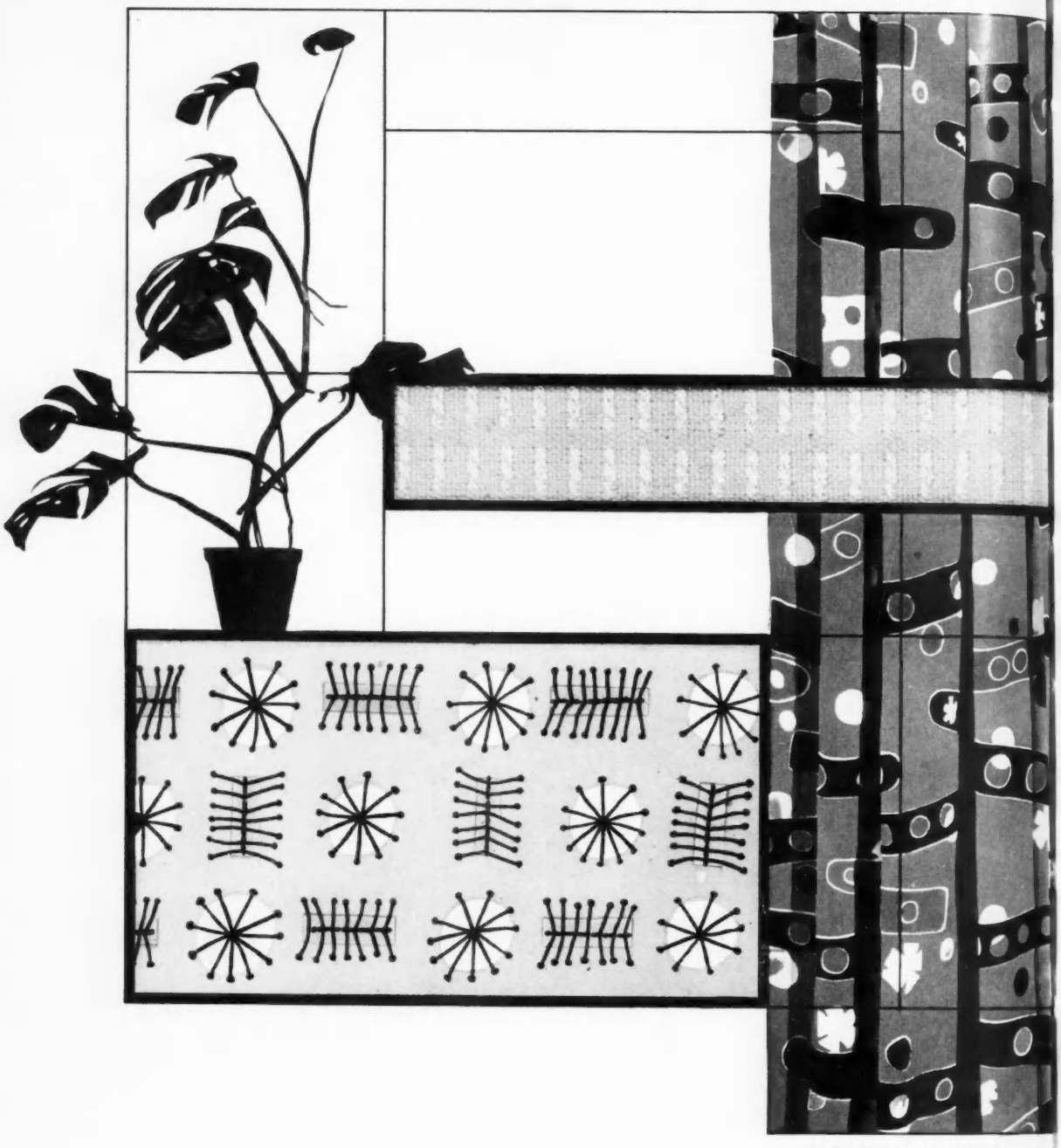

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APRIL 1952

Design

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'It's what the public wants'

"THAT'S A BIT of a bastard" we overheard a visitor say, pointing to a flatulent piece of Repro-Jaco. "That's an insult to bastards," retorted the manufacturer; "there are no words bad enough to describe that stuff and we know it, but it's what the public wants."

We purposely went to the 1952 British Furniture Exhibition at Earl's Court on a Saturday afternoon to see the public wanting its furniture, and after several hours of mingling and eavesdropping we came away with the clear impression that the public has other ideas, especially the young couples. Wherever we saw a crowd of young men and women on a stand we found a display of modest, well-made furniture; and in most cases this furniture could be classed as of good contemporary design. The grander stands, and particularly those sporting fat, shiny suites named after titles in the peerage or after the smarter districts of the West End, seemed to be relatively deserted except for their staffs of glossy salesmen. But, as the manufacturer said, the furniture trade must go on supplying its bread-and-butter lines until indications of a change in public demand are clearer; then he and his friends will have a go. Indeed, several are already having a go and are getting it wrong.

Perhaps the sorriest features of the exhibition were the half-baked attempts by the opportunists to "cash-in on contemporary." Many stands were showing reproduction contemporary, embodying all the more obvious and boring mannerisms of post-war design, exaggerating the angles of the legs, sharpening the contrasts in timber, bleaching and bending and tapering and routing without rhyme or reason other than the lure of fashion. One firm was even offering contemporary pieces with an antique finish – little bleached boxes on splayed stilts with corners and extremities rubbed and darkened. Such nonsense should make all who are interested in better furniture think again about the word "contemporary." As we said last year, the first call is for a new set of values in furniture: "Good furniture," we said, "is the product of honest workmanship, careful choice of right materials, considerate study of the consumers' needs and pocket, and only lastly of a sense for contemporary style."

After this year's disappointing show perhaps the most we should ask for is some decent furniture, irrespective of period or style. P. R.